

TOWARD A MODERN CHINESE BUDDHISM

Taixu's Reforms

Don A. Pittman

University of Hawai'i Press
Honolulu

© 2001 University of Hawai'i Press

All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

01 02 03 04 05 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pittman, Don Alvin.

Toward a modern Chinese Buddhism : Taixu's reforms / Don. A. Pittman

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0–8248–2231–5 (alk. paper)

1. Buddhist renewal—China. 2. Ta'i-hsü

BQ4570.R4 P58 2001

294.3'0951'09041—dc21

00–061603

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for permanence and durability of the Council on Library Resources.

Printed by The Maple-Vail Book Manufacturing Group

For Nancy

and in memory of
Joseph Mitsuo Kitagawa
(1915–1992)

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix
A Note on Romanization xi

Introduction: In Search of a New Buddhism 1

1 Defending the Dharma in a Revolutionary Age

2 The Sound of the Tide for a New China 61

3 An Ecumenical Vision for Global Mission 105

4 Mahāyāna and the Modern World 153

5 A Creative Recovery of Tradition 196

6 Taixu's Legacy 255

Notes 299
Glossary of Chinese Characters 353
Selected Bibliography 363
Index 379

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book on modern Chinese Buddhism evolved over a number of years, and in its preparation I benefited from the help of many people. Those who read all or part of the manuscript and offered valuable comments include Joseph M. Kitagawa, who first suggested to me a study of Taixu's reforms when I was a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago, Frank E. Reynolds, Judith A. Berling, Liu Qingqian, and Venerable Master Shengyan. Richard C. Bush, Jr., was kind enough to loan me his set of *Taixu dashi quanshu* (The Complete Writings of the Venerable Master Taixu) until I could purchase my own. Hong Jinlian and the staff of the Chung-Hwa Buddhist Institute, the library staff of the Fa-Kuang Buddhist Institute, and Shen Jiaqi of the School History Office and Chinese Catholic Museum of Fu Jen University, all in Taipei, kindly answered questions and provided me with helpful materials.

Appreciation must also be expressed to Venerable Master Xingyun and the staff of Foguang Shan, who invited me to participate in the 1990 Foguang Shan International Buddhist Conference on "Buddhism in the Modern World" and to deliver a paper on Taixu. In connection with that conference, I would also like to thank John R. McRae, the coordinator for the English-language section, as well as the Office of Graduate Studies and Research, Texas Christian University, which provided me with a faculty travel grant. For the encouragement offered

in recent years by President I-to Loh and my colleagues at Tainan Theological College and Seminary, Tainan, Taiwan, I am also very grateful.

For permission to publish the photographs of Venerable Master Taixu and Venerable Master Yinshun, I would like to thank the Yinshun Cultural and Educational Foundation (Yinshun wenjiao jijin hui) in Xinzhu County, Taiwan. For providing the photograph of Venerable Master Xingyun, I would like to thank Venerable Master Juemen, Executive General of Foguang Shan, Kaohsiung County, Taiwan. For the photograph of Venerable Master Shengyan, I want to thank the staff of the Nongchan si near Taipei, and for that of Venerable Master Zhengyan, the staff of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Philanthropic Foundation (Fojiao Ciji shan shiye jijin hui) near Hualian, Taiwan.

Several research assistants in the United States and Taiwan labored to help me find and interpret relevant materials. Therefore, I want to thank Jin Gu, Pamela G. Holt, Chen Wenshan, and Lin Mingzhen. I also wish to thank Patricia Crosby, senior editor of the University of Hawai'i Press, and her editorial staff for their patient assistance during the publication process, as well as the two anonymous readers whose critical reviews of the first draft prepared for the press were very helpful in making final revisions. Of course, any errors of fact or judgment in the book are my responsibility alone.

Finally, I wish to thank my entire family. Without their constant love and support—especially that of my wife Nancy and my daughters Debra, Katheryn, and Merillat—the sustained effort required of this extended period of research and writing would not have been possible.

D. A. P.

A NOTE ON ROMANIZATION

No single romanization system for Chinese names and terms is satisfactory in all respects. The Wade-Giles system or some variant of it was used in virtually all the English-language resources cited in this study. However, because the *pinyin* romanization system, often referred to as the United Nations' Mandarin Phonetic Symbol System, is increasingly used in both scholarly and popular literature, I have chosen to adopt it in this book. Therefore, romanizations within quoted material have been edited to conform to this system, unless otherwise noted.

A few exceptions have been made for certain personal or place names that are commonly recognized in the West, such as Chiang Kai-shek (rather than Jiang Jieshi) and Taipei (rather than Taibei). For clarification, the Wade-Giles romanization is included in parentheses following the *pinyin* romanization for all personal names in the Glossary of Chinese Characters.

Chinese authors whose works have been published in English are cited under their own chosen romanizations (e.g., Yu-yue Tsu), except in a few cases where the authors were significant participants in the events of the period and are mentioned as such in the text; an example is Hu Shi, whose English publications bear the romanized name Hu Shih.

All romanizations within the titles of published works in English have been retained. Also preserved are the self-selected romanized names of certain Buddhist institutions or organizations that are internationally known, such as Tzu Chi (*pinyin:* Ciji).

INTRODUCTION

IN SEARCH OF A NEW BUDDHISM

The chaotic Republican period in China (1912–1949) was one of intense self-criticism, ideological polarization, military conflict, and change. The corrupt Manchu dynasty had been overthrown, yet the forging of a new social order proved far more difficult than anyone had imagined. It was a time of grand utopian dreams and of harsh, unyielding realities. Foreign intrusions, famine, civil war, and constant struggle in social, political, and religious spheres among conservatives, progressives, and radical modernists characterized the period.

Striving to recover from the anti-Buddhist paroxysms of the violent Taiping Rebellion (1851–1864) and deeply concerned with spiritual revitalization, the Buddhist community was not exempt from bitter clashes between traditional and reformist visions of an appropriate response to the post-dynastic context and the secularizing influences of modernity. Moreover, against external threats of confiscation, the sangha had to defend its institutional holdings in China and assert its right to self-regulatory propagation.* The numerous Chinese Buddhist associations chartered during the Republican period tried to present their institutional concerns to governmental authorities

* In this study, the term "Sangha" with an initial capital letter refers to the entire Buddhist community, including monastic and lay practitioners, whereas the term "sangha" in lowercase refers more narrowly to the monastic community.

and counter the arguments and actions of hostile anti-religionists. They sought to affirm their ancient religious tradition as an enduringly valuable part of the Chinese cultural heritage, to improve the public image of Buddhism through various devotional, educational, and social service activities, and to present an effective challenge to Christian missionaries from Europe and North America.

A pivotal figure among Chinese Buddhist reformers in the quest for a new, modern form of Buddhism was the monk Taixu (1890–1947). An energetic, intelligent leader whom many Buddhists came to revere highly, he was nevertheless judged by most of the Chinese monastic community as a teacher far too radical in his insistence on religious change. More concerned with establishing a pure land on earth than in achieving rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Amitābha, Taixu called for a revitalization of Buddhism through institutional reorganization, modern education, compassionate social action, and ecumenical cooperation in global mission. Conservative teachers in the sangha, such as the respected Pure Land master Yinguang (1861–1940), responded by portraying Taixu as a gifted but dangerously strident and disruptive voice within a Chinese Buddhist community that did not need innovation but only rededication to its ancient patterns of spiritual discipline.

Taixu's own assessment of his ultimate failure to convert the majority of the sangha to his point of view about the need for a complete "Buddhist revolution" *(fojiao geming)* referred not to the extremity of his ideas but to his unfortunate inability to inspire and lead people in a difficult and divisive time.[1] Holmes Welch, however, in *The Buddhist Revival in China,* asserts that Taixu's most serious failing was that he did not seem "to have pondered deeply enough on whether, if Chinese Buddhism was reformed in the manner he proposed, it would still be Buddhist or even Chinese." In Welch's opinion, had Taixu's modernizing, secularizing reforms been fully carried out, "most of the identifiably Buddhist, specifically religious institutions and practices would have faded away."[2]

Although I prefer not to speculate about the validity of this latter hypothesis, I would suggest that Taixu did seriously consider the direction of his proposed reforms. In fact, his specific intention was

to facilitate a transition toward a modern form of Buddhism *and beyond*. His teachings, which he sought to ground in Mahāyāna scriptures and traditional paradigms, were intended to address directly the pressing social and spiritual problems of the twentieth century in keeping with what he understood to be the ultimate goals of institutional Buddhism—goals that lay beyond the preservation of institutional Buddhism itself. Indeed, in forging his unique response to the issues that the Sangha confronted in the Republican period, Taixu can be said to represent within the Chinese Buddhist community a "classical" figure, in Joachim Wach's sense.[3] That is to say, he represents a "type" of spirituality which exemplifies religious trends that John Randall, Joseph Kitagawa, and others have identified as prominent in the modern period: namely, an ethicization of religion and a this-worldly soteriology.[4] In essence, he represents a particular form of religious piety.

TAIXU AS "ETHICAL PIETIST"

To appreciate Taixu's particular form of piety and the nature of the "Buddhist revolution" to which he called his religious community, a brief preliminary discussion of the heuristic model that I employ in this study is appropriate. Without imposing an overly rigid analytical framework on Taixu's life and work, I want to be clear about my use of comparative terminology in characterizing his teachings and contribution to modern Chinese Buddhism. Thus, in this particular study, I use the term "truth" in its most comprehensive, transformative sense, to refer to a disclosure of the way things are in actuality in relation to the way things ought to be ideally. "Religious" truth refers to such a disclosure or revelation that is specifically linked to compelling experiences of transcendent realities or verities. Nonreligious ideologies often present comprehensive and functionally similar pictures of present realities and future possibilities without explicit references to transcendence. Yet in both cases, truth includes both a visionary and an ethical dimension.[5]

By "visionary," I intend to convey the idea that what a perspectival tradition enables one to "see" is precisely the ultimate context for human existence. What is apprehended are those realities or values that are of central significance for life, and to which all other realities and commitments should be subordinate. Religious or ideological communities, therefore, support identity formation as individual people come to realize who they are in relation to all things. Expressions of visionary experiences—through forms of art, music, dance, poetry, mythic narrative, sacred history, highly systematized doctrinal apology, and so forth—map reality and locate persons in terms of past, present, and future verities. Defining normative ways of thinking, they orient one to the nature of ultimacy, the spatio-temporal universe, and the human being in community, as Table 1 shows.

The "ethical" dimension of truth, as employed in this study, refers broadly to a tradition's normative modes of action that integrally and creatively relate to aspects of the visionary dimension of truth.[6] That is, religious or ideological perspectives are most comprehensively founded not only on realizations of who each person is in relation to all things, but on intuitive apprehensions of what each one should do to live within reality-as-it-is in greater congruity with reality-as-it-should-be. As a result, creative interactions between disparate visionary and ethical experiences of truth may contribute to significant perspectival changes within a tradition—and to redefinitions of what it is most important to teach and how truth should be embodied in contemporary contexts.

Within specifically religious communities, primary apprehensions of salvific modes of action are often expressed in at least four basic types of norms, or sets of ideal rules, roles, themes, and images:

Norms for cultic performance—requirements for proper liturgical practice in both ordinary and extraordinary times;

Norms for self-cultivation—personal disciplines for spiritual maturation, including dietary, hygienic, meditational, educational, and other transformational practices;

Norms for the organization of the holy community—structural expectations for optimally productive forms of intracommunal religious

Table 1. Transformational Truth

Transformational Truth	Experiential Aspect	Expressional Aspect	
Visionary Dimension	Immediate, holistic apprehensions of reality, of the way things are in actuality in relation to the way things ought to be ideally; the realization of personal identity in relation to all things	Shared understandings of the ultimate context for human existence; theoretical articulations that map reality and locate persons in terms of past, present, and future verities; normative ways of thinking	Understandings of the nature of ultimacy Understandings of the spatio-temporal universe Understandings of the human being in community
Ethical Dimension	Intuitive apprehensions of what one must do to live within reality-as-it-is in greater congruity with reality-as-it-should-be	Shared understandings of how most appropriately to live in light of the total context and conditions that shape human identity and destiny; normative ways of acting	Norms for cultic performance Norms for self-cultivation Norms for the organization of the holy community Norms for social responsibility (morality)

interchange and for appropriate relations with other communities, sacred and secular; and

Norms for social responsibility—basic moral guidelines that contribute to spiritual progress and the realization of the ideal social order.

Any particular valued or devalued action may, of course, be related to more than a single norm. For example, religious practices such as fasting, praying, preaching, healing the sick, and hunting could be described in relation to all four of these types of ethical norms.

Religious traditions are dynamic realities, of course, which in varying degrees and contexts validate competing forms of piety and different emphases with regard to truth. By the term "piety," I refer to a disposition of thought and action that is both the means and the end, or goal, of transformational discipline. Historians of religions and students of comparative religious ethics are naturally interested in understanding the multiple ways—even within single traditions—that link the visionary and ethical dimensions of truth. Historians of religions have been especially interested in studying the historical development of different forms of spirituality and the dynamics of intra-religious as well as interreligious conflict.

In relation to this bidimensional characterization of religious truth, important features of many religious traditions may be illuminated by identifying two basic forms of religious piety: visionary piety and ethical piety. Advocates of a visionary piety may be said to emphasize the attainment of mental dispositions, the "seeing" of the true nature of things. For them, being religious primarily means believing certain things, trusting in the verity of certain comprehensive visions. Ethical expressions of truth deemed most important for sustaining such visions without obstructing them are given priority. Ethical pietists, in contrast, tend to emphasize transformation through normative activities—that is, the doing of truth. For them, being religious primarily means acting according to prescribed rules and roles. Regardless of the ethical norms emphasized, what are highlighted are those aspects of the tradition's vision that undergird such practices without apparent contradiction or unnecessary complication.

In addition to the differences in orientation between these two basic forms of piety, strong disagreements frequently occur within pieties. Individuals and groups within a religious community may vigorously debate which aspects of their shared vision or ethical norms ought to be judged of the highest priority for spiritual attainment. For example, some religious people who can be fundamentally characterized as ethical pietists may be drawn to emphasize cultic performance. For them, religious practice means, essentially, participation in rites. Other ethical pietists within the same community may locate the essence of their spiritual life in actualizing norms for social responsibility, while giving minimal attention to cultic participation.

Religious debate can also be related to the tension between different expectations about experiential intensity or expressional clarity. A central issue may be to what extent it is necessary or even possible to describe the content of religious experiences. Many practitioners may question to what degree such intellectual efforts constitute spiritually centripetal or centrifugal activities—that is, whether they draw one closer to ultimate transformation or propel one farther away from it. A "mystic," for example, may assert that other seekers within his or her own tradition have lost the transforming immediacy of their religious experience due to excessive concern with producing systematized doctrines or with advocating prescribed ethical systems. Yet those who make such charges may themselves be criticized as seekers so absorbed in the immediacy of the sacred that they are unable or unwilling to share such experiences with clarity and thereby foster the creation of community.

These distinctions help us understand Taixu's significance within his own religious community and, even more broadly, the significance of his particular type of piety in the history of religions. I hope to demonstrate, first, that Taixu was an ethical pietist. While he was concerned about explicating the Buddhist vision, and accordingly devoted considerable attention to reviving interest in the complex idealistic philosophy of the Weishi (Consciousness-Only) school, Taixu believed that religious actions were at the very heart of the spiritual life. In a new bodhisattva's process of religious transformation, the Chinese reformer gave priority to selfless modes of action that both expressed

and produced profound insights into emptiness. For those struggling along the bodhisattva's path toward full enlightenment, Taixu emphasized that wisdom could not be attained apart from compassionate actions in the world. This was a truth, he asserted, that far too many Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioners, both monastic and lay, seemed to have forgotten, to their peril.

Second, I hope to show that, in the course of stressing enlightenment through the doing of truth (i.e., the concrete embodiment of religious truth within the world), Taixu also emphasized those ethical norms of the Buddhist heritage especially related to social responsibility. He was concerned with norms for cultic performance, self-cultivation, and organizational efficiency, yet his principle concern was, clearly, human morality. Furthermore, he affirmed a soteriology that understood personal metanoia as intrinsically related to the transformation of the entire social order. Unlike many of his contemporaries within the sangha, he understood action within the socio-political sphere to be a primary means to complete enlightenment, not an obstacle to it.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

Chapter 1 summarizes the historical context in which Taixu's controversial leadership emerged. China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was marked by political and intellectual revolution, by conflicting responses to the West and what it represented. The goal of virtually all civic leaders was the creation of a "new people" *(xin min)*, yet there was much disagreement on the necessary and appropriate means to that end. Some leaders were optimists who hoped for a slow, evolutionary transformation of Chinese society; some were warlords who sought to dictate the direction of change; some were cultural iconoclasts with more energy for tearing down than building up; some were utopian dreamers who envisioned completely new forms of socio-political order. Buddhist leaders were determined to protect their religious community during this turbulent period and to promote its role in a new China. Yet they faced a

formidable task. Thus I review key elements of the crises of the late Qing and Republican periods and of the efforts of Chinese Buddhists to defend the Dharma in light of complex internal and external challenges.

In Chapters 2 and 3, I offer a biographical sketch of Taixu's career as a Buddhist master, from his introduction to the religion as a young boy to his eventual status as the most internationally recognized leader within the Chinese Buddhist community of his day. Chapter 2 looks at Taixu's early career, including his spiritual formation and initial efforts to reenliven the Chinese Sangha. Thus this chapter highlights his concerns as a Chinese patriot immediately before and after the historic 1911 revolution and his relationships with known socialists, anarchists, and Buddhist radicals; it also reviews his plans for reorganizing and reforming the monastic community, and for promoting its closer ties to lay groups interested in reform. In Chapter 3, I summarize Taixu's religious activities both in China and abroad in the latter half of his career, as he sought to foster interreligious and intercultural understanding, Buddhist ecumenical cooperation, and global mission.

Chapters 4 and 5 present a synopsis of Taixu's teachings about his "new Buddhism" *(xin fojiao)*. Of particular interest is the way he shaped his presentation of the Mahāyāna heritage so as to highlight the tradition as potentially, if not in actual practice, the most scientifically respectable and socially responsible religious force within human society. In Chapter 4, I examine Taixu's basic perspectives on the role of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the contemporary world, summarizing his description of what he judged to be the fundamental dilemma of the modern, secularized age—namely, the catastrophic loss of any adequate foundation for moral action. Taixu argued that the development of modern science, however beneficial, had effectively discredited all god-language, had undermined both theological and philosophical ethics, and had fueled a consumerism that threatened to destroy all civility. In response, the Chinese master prescribed what he considered the only effective antidote to the spreading global poison of egocentrism and violence: a "Buddhism for human life" *(rensheng fojiao)*.

In the context of this human-centered Buddhism, Taixu pursued concrete solutions to real human problems, both spiritual and politi-

cal. He sought to restate and refocus traditional Chinese Buddhism as he simultaneously encouraged a reconstitution of the Chinese social world. The most politically involved of all the major Buddhist leaders in the Republican period, he clearly thought of himself as a patriot working toward practical religio-cultural syntheses of new and old. His concern was to demonstrate the relevance of Mahāyāna Buddhism for the creation of a "moral culture" that could heal the wounds of a deeply divided China as well as those of an increasingly polarized and violent global community.

Chapter 5 presents a more detailed account of the bodhisattva's pilgrimage toward complete enlightenment and the religious community's potentialities. Taixu's characteristic descriptions of the path to buddhahood, though in accord with Mahāyāna understandings, were still expressive of his particular form of piety. Through what might be termed a "creative recovery of tradition," he sought to distance himself from those masters who stressed dependence on great celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather, he emphasized what could actually be accomplished in this world through the self-sacrificial work of thousands of average bodhisattvas dedicated to building a pure land here and now. Indeed, beyond merely recommending the unified practice of the Six Perfections *(liu du)*, Taixu was willing to explore practical plans for realizing a communal utopia on earth. His complementary plans for reorganizing and reducing the size of the Chinese sangha proved to be highly controversial and were widely ridiculed. Although many aspects of his parallel efforts to modernize monastic education for "new monks" *(xin seng)* were gradually accepted, many Buddhist leaders actively discouraged students from attending Taixu's seminaries.

Nevertheless, despite conservative Buddhist critiques that Taixu was rashly dangerous, secular humanist conclusions that he was completely irrelevant, and Christian missionary charges that he was spiritually misguided, the reformer's sense of direction remained unaltered. In response to ardent advocates of Pure Land devotionalism who spoke of declining abilities in the final Dharma age *(mofa)*, Taixu asserted that their pessimism about this world was not in keeping either with the spirit and needs of the modern world or with the primary thrust of Mahāyāna. In response to secular humanists, Taixu argued that their position was fundamentally relativistic and that they had misjudged the beneficial contribution that a modern form of Buddhism could make to China's reconstruction and to an emerging global culture. In response to Christian evangelists, he claimed that a theistic faith was no longer tenable in the modern, scientific world and that the particular form of civilization that Christianity had spawned was destructive of human community everywhere.

Chapter 6 discusses Taixu's legacy after 1949 within the Chinese Sangha, especially his influence on the revival of Buddhism in contemporary Taiwan. As Frank Millican remarked in 1923, "Taixu and modern Buddhism are inseparable. You can no more write intelligently about modern Buddhism and ignore Taixu than you could about the [Protestant] Reformation and leave [Martin] Luther out."[7] Developments in the last seventy-five years have only reinforced Millican's prescient judgment, made when Taixu was only thirty-three. Today, the teachings of the charismatic master from Zhejiang continue to shape aspects of a revitalized Buddhism in East Asia. In the People's Republic of China there is renewed interest in his career, despite his close ties to the Guomindang government, and in Taiwan important masters such as Yinshun, Xingyun, Shengyan, and Zhengyan have all advanced dimensions of his modernization. Taixu may have felt that his "Buddhist revolution" failed, yet his work remains the basis for intellectual, humanitarian, and missionary-minded expressions of the religion around the world. Contemporary Buddhism within the Chinese cultural sphere simply cannot be fully understood apart from his efforts at reform.

Taixu interpreted Mahāyāna Buddhism as a religion that was both in harmony with Śākyamuni's teachings and appropriate to the special needs and spirit of his time. In so doing, he exemplified trends found within many religious traditions in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His efforts have much in common with those of other Asian Buddhist leaders who have advocated a socially engaged Buddhism and joined liberation movements against all forms of human oppression. Much like advocates of the liberal Christian Social Gospel and of Reform Judaism, Taixu simplified and radicalized his

religious heritage, defining the essence of the religion in a way that emphasized the role of selfless bodhisattvas in, but not of, the world.

As a realist, Taixu acknowledged the complexities of the human condition in an increasingly interdependent and dangerous global community. As a utopian, he sought to paint with bold colors intriguing images of an enlightened realm of justice and equanimity, a future pure land on earth. Optimistic about human potential for attaining final buddhahood, his goal was progress toward a fully modern form of Buddhism and beyond.

CHAPTER 1

DEFENDING THE DHARMA IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE

In the late nineteenth century, long before the 1911 revolution that forced the abdication of Puyi (1906–1967), the last emperor of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912), Chinese intellectuals were engaged in a reevaluation on an unprecedented scale of the very foundations of their ancient culture. The primary reasons for this intense introspection, and the sometimes polarizing, divisive debate that it occasioned, were serious dynastic decline and the growing influence in China of western civilization.[1] Local revolts and regional rebellions against Manchu rule caused significant upheaval and dislocation. Many issues that contributed to the general unrest and sense of insecurity, such as official corruption, taxation policies, and governmental treatment of minority groups, were essentially unrelated to the presence of westerners in China. Other critical issues, however, were either directly or indirectly related to western influences on a society that for centuries had been minimally affected by developments elsewhere in the world.

Westernization was largely a consequence of the Chinese empire's forced political and economic concessions to foreign powers that began with the Opium War (1839–1842). China's military defeat by Great Britain and the subsequent infusion of western personnel and ideas into the country had created a piercing awareness of a fundamental disequilibrium between civilizations that had to be addressed.

Not only had China's sovereignty been compromised, but the previously confident self-perception of the Chinese people had been seriously challenged. The precise nature of the imbalance between East and West and the identity crisis that it precipitated were differently evaluated. Yet on one resolution virtually all Chinese could agree: in view of these untoward circumstances, creative, energetic leadership was needed to reconsider the country's past and reenvision its future in a changing global environment. The solution to China's internal problems, many judged, was intrinsically related to an appropriate response to the new external pressures. As a result, as Joseph Levenson has suggested, two sharply contrasting responses emerged to this crisis of identity vis-à-vis the West: the abandonment of tradition by iconoclasts on the one hand, and its petrifaction by traditionalists on the other. Significantly, both these responses, the iconoclastic as well as the traditionalistic, demonstrated "a Chinese concern to establish the equivalence of China and the West."[2]

For several millennia, the Chinese people had considered their country, Zhongguo (the "Middle Kingdom"), to be the center of the world. They thought of their domain not so much as one nation among others but as the sole civilized world surrounded by peoples of less developed societies. Attempts to enforce a tributary system, in which countries that desired relations with China were required to acknowledge their inferior status, reflected this ethnocentric worldview. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the ceremonies associated with a unified tributary system became highly structured, and the formal procedures for establishing and maintaining relations with China were very complicated and expensive.[3]

By the late sixteenth century, elements of a more bilateral model for foreign relations were introduced through interchange with the Manchus and Mongols. However, western nations encountering the country's hierarchical political ideology in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries responded to all aspects of the tributary system with considerable resentment. Prior to 1800, all but one of the leaders of the trade missions to China from western powers were forced to accede to demands to kowtow before the Qing emperor in accordance with the rituals of the system.[4] Yet by the early nineteenth century, the governments and commercial agents of the western nations refused to recognize or comply fully with Chinese expectations. As Immanuel C.Y. Hsü notes:

> The traders wanted greater freedom of action, and the Western governments, newly released from the Napoleonic Wars and greatly strengthened by the Industrial Revolution, would not suffer the tributary treatment. They insisted on international relations according to the law and diplomacy of Europe; but the Chinese would not sacrifice their cherished system. In effect, they said, "We have not asked you to come; if you come you must accept our ways," to which the West's reply was "You cannot stop us from coming and we will come on our own terms."[5]

The English defeat of the Chinese in the Opium War dramatized and reinforced that sharp reply. Furthermore, it opened China to increased western trade based on a series of unequal treaties that not only were extremely advantageous to the western nations but substantively undermined Chinese sovereignty as well. Five treaty ports were authorized by the Treaty of Nanjing in 1842, and that number increased dramatically in the last half of the nineteenth century through other treaty concessions. By 1911, westerners from a number of nations resided with extraterritorial privileges in forty-eight Chinese cities. Governed by their own national laws rather than those of the empire, such treaty-port communities were established on a combination of commercial self-interest and Christian evangelical zeal.[6] Indeed, many westerners interpreted their presence and work in China as a part of a divinely ordained vocation, in Max Weber's sense.[7] Many related their individual calling to the manifest destiny not only of Christianity but of capitalism throughout the world. Given this rationalization of their place on Chinese soil, it surprised no one that these "foreign devils," as they were commonly called, often displayed arrogance and disdain, whether or not consciously intended, for the Chinese people and their ways of life.[8]

The Manchu's authority to rule the empire was increasingly challenged from within the country as well as from without. Their right to govern was jeopardized not only because of the bureaucracy's

inability to respond effectively to the aggressive exploitation of China by foreign powers, but also because of widespread poverty among the rural peasants, unemployment and crime in urban areas, excessive taxation, and notable government corruption and mismanagement. The Mandate of Heaven on which Qing authority rested was widely questioned, and in mid century, civil strife erupted throughout the empire. The Taiping (1851–1864), Nian (1851–1868), and Moslem (1855–1873) rebellions were suppressed only with tremendous bloodshed and loss of life.[9] In the 1860s and 1870s, as a result, the Qing government was forced to adopt a reform agenda in a self-strengthening movement known as the Tongzhi Restoration (Tongzhi zhongxing). However, as Mary Clabaugh Wright has shown, the "restoration" only momentarily reduced growing social conflict and alienation with the Manchus.[10]

During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, debate between ideological conservatives and advocates of modernization intensified. The fundamental flaw in the initially attractive proposal of selective innovation championed by Zhang Zhidong (1837–1909) and others —and captured in the famous phrase *"Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong"* (Chinese learning for essential values, Western learning for practical values)—came to be recognized by all.[11] The Chinese "essence" was increasingly devalued as wholly irrelevant for achieving the practical objectives of economic and technological advancement required for parity with the West. At the same time, western imperialism and Japanese aggression continued to increase throughout Asia, with numerous spheres of interest and leased territories in China being exploited for foreign gain, accompanied by a corresponding increase in xenophobia and anti-Christian sentiment among the Chinese people. Political decentralization also accelerated, in part because of governmental corruption, in part because of local militarization and the formation of regional armies.[12] The reform program initiated by the emperor Guangxu (1871–1908) in the wake of China's humiliating defeat in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) was immediately countermanded by the powerful empress dowager Cixi (1835–1908).[13] Incarcerating the emperor in the palace and continuing to blame all China's problems on foreign intervention, the dowager's court chose

furtively to support the anti-foreign paroxysms that characterized the Boxer Rebellion of 1899–1900.[14]

With the death of the empress dowager in November 1908, and the mysterious death the previous day of the emperor Guangxu, the dowager's three-year-old grandnephew Puyi succeeded to the Dragon Throne as the Emperor Xuantong. His father, who was selected to assume the responsibilities of regent during the emperor's minority, was at first perceived to be receptive to a transition toward a true constitutional monarchy. Yet he immediately disappointed reformers, both by rejecting petitions calling for the convening of a parliament and by appointing a preponderance of Manchu advisers to his cabinet. Optimism quickly waned about any significant change under Qing rule, and the political momentum swung sharply toward revolutionary leaders like Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). Chairman of the Chinese United League (Tongmeng hui), a revolutionary organization founded in 1905, Sun succinctly formulated the three primary goals of the radicals: nationalism *(minzu)*, democracy *(minquan)*, and economic livelihood *(minsheng)*. The manifesto of the Chinese United League called explicitly for the overthrow of the tyrannical Manchu dynasty, the restoration of China to control of the Chinese, the establishment of a republican form of government elected by the people, and the equalization of land ownership in a socialist state.[15]

When an anti-Manchu revolt in Wuchang in October 1911 precipitated multiple declarations of provincial independence from Beijing, Sun Yat-sen was in the United States pursuing diplomatic support for revolution. Upon his return to China, provincial delegates to a revolutionary assembly convening in Shanghai immediately elected him provisional president of the Republic of China, a position he officially assumed in Nanjing on January 1, 1912. Yuan Shikai (1859–1916), the powerful governor-general of Hunan and Hubei, was finally persuaded by Sun, through assurances of future power, to throw his support behind the burgeoning revolutionary movement. With that critical political and military development, the position of the Qing court, which had also pleaded desperately for Yuan's continued support, became untenable. On February 12, 1912, the young emperor Xuantong's abdication was formalized, ending 268 years of Manchu

rule, and the long dynastic history of China came to an end. Taixu, the politically active young Buddhist monk from Zhejiang who was advocating a parallel religious revolution, was then twenty-two years old.[16]

A NEW REPUBLIC IN TURMOIL

Yuan Shikai was elected the first president of the Republic when Sun Yat-sen stepped aside for tactical reasons. However, at the time there was no one reform agenda—or leader—to which a majority of the Chinese people were clearly committed. As James Sheridan has described this transitional period,

> There was little sense of a national community, little cooperative effort toward a national end. The orientation [of the revolution] was anti-Manchu, anti-imperialist, and strongly provincialistic. There was no national hero or leader who could become the symbol of national aspirations, and thereby stimulate nationalist feelings. Sun Yat-sen did not have the capacity for that role, and in any event Sun was not a central figure in 1911, except to his own United League. . . . But the most important limitation on Chinese nationalism was the limited involvement of the mass of the Chinese people. Peasants joined the revolt, of course, but their participation was localized in character and restrictive in goals. For most, the revolution ended with provincial secession. That is why, despite the bloodshed that did occur, the revolution seems curiously bland. In 1911, Chinese nationalism was only skin deep.[17]

Yuan Shikai's own rather limited reform commitments were immediately obvious when he became engaged in bitter struggles with Sun Yat-sen's more progressive colleagues who were active within the newly formed Nationalist Party (Guomindang). In part this stemmed from Yuan's basic judgment that the Chinese people were not actually prepared for democracy, a view in which he was encouraged by numerous conservative advisers who favored a monarchy. With the help of provincial warlords, Yuan soon betrayed the republican movement altogether, dissolving the Guomindang in 1913 and brashly

attempting to assume imperial powers. The ill-conceived bid was ultimately unsuccessful; Yuan died in the summer of 1916 as his political authority was disintegrating into the political confusion and bitter civil warfare that was to characterize the next twenty years.

With the death of the Republic's first president, chaos reigned. In the power vacuum, warlords rushed into battle with each other for control. For a brief time Kang Youwei (1858–1927) and others sought vainly to restore the last emperor Puyi to an imperial throne, while Sun Yat-sen reestablished his military government at Guangzhou (Canton) in order to protect the fragile Republican constitution. Discouraged by his lack of success and in failing health, Sun died in Beijing nine years later, in 1925, during efforts to negotiate peace and unification between his Republican government in the south and the warlord government that had succeeded that of Yuan Shikai in the north. It was not until 1927 that Nationalist forces under the direction of general Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) succeeded in unifying the country with an extensive military expedition against the northern warlords.

That successful unification, however tentative and superficial, was also in part the result of an uneasy coalition forged between the Guomindang and the fledgling Chinese Communist Party (Gongchandang), founded in Shanghai in 1921 through the efforts of intellectuals such as Chen Duxiu (1879–1942) and Li Dazhao (1889–1927). With the guidance of Bolshevik emissaries, the Chinese Communist Party initially committed itself to a radical Marxist utopianism and the advancement of socialism without any collaboration with bourgeois-democrats. Ultimately, however, Lenin counseled a strategic accommodation with the Guomindang until the communist movement had an opportunity to develop greater popular support throughout the country. A first united front agreement for the purpose of seeking national unification was thus reached with leaders of the Guomindang in 1924. As Derek Waller has suggested, the Communists thought a united front would provide an opportunity for taking eventual control of the Guomindang, whereas Nationalist leaders thought they could contain the Communists while making use of the economic aid and military weaponry provided by their Russian supporters.[18] As

a part of the first united front agreement, three Communists were elected to the Central Executive Committee of the Guomindang. The young political radical from Hunan, Mao Zedong (1893–1976), was made an alternate member.

Fundamental tensions, however, between the aims of the Guomindang and the more radical revolutionary goals of the Communists could not long be peacefully mediated. By 1927, Chiang Kai-shek was prepared to terminate the united front and deal militarily with the Communists, their Russian patrons, and their left-wing sympathizers within the Guomindang. His army's swift and ruthless massacre of Communist Party members and supporters in Shanghai, which had become a center for their activities under the leadership of Zhou Enlai (1898–1976), marked the end of the united front. Within days, the party's structure was almost totally destroyed and its future viability in China seriously jeopardized. In the wake of the Shanghai disaster, it was Mao Zedong who was increasingly recognized as the Communist Party's visionary leader. An advocate for the advancement of communism through the organization and ideological education of peasants in the countryside, Mao argued forcefully that rural bases, or "soviets," would provide opportunities for effective land reform and guerrilla warfare against the Guomindang. Moreover, they would be far less vulnerable to attack than urban proletariat organizations.

In the early 1930s, Chiang Kai-shek directed four "encirclement and annihilation" campaigns designed to eliminate the Communists. Mao was eventually forced to abandon his principal base in Jiangxi in 1934 and flee on a torturous year-long "Long March" to Shaanxi, on which many thousands of his followers perished. At the same time, with Chiang's political fortunes apparently on the rise, the Guomindang tried to instill in the populace the expectation of a forthcoming period of peace and prosperity for China. Government leaders encouraged an increased measure of optimism about the creation of a new people and about the salvation of the country. In a campaign initiated in 1934 and known as "the New Life Movement" (Xin shenghuo yundong), Chiang advocated a form of militaristic personal discipline and hygiene for the entire citizenry. Such appeals for reform through personal discipline were only partially successful, however,

and ultimately failed to inspire the confidence and passion of the masses to the same extent as Mao's continuing call for change through systematic class struggle.

From 1937 to 1945, to counter Japanese aggression during the second Sino-Japanese War, the Guomindang and the Communist Party were led of necessity to forge another united front, although the truce was never faithfully observed. The Communists used the time during World War II to gain considerable popular support, military strength, and territorial control. By the end of the war in 1945, they were well-positioned for the final, bitter days of civil war, despite the Nationalists' confidence that they themselves could win a military confrontation. Attempts by the United States to moderate discussions of a possible coalition government between the Communists and the Nationalists quickly failed. The military struggle that ensued ended only four years later, with Mao Zedong's declaration in Beijing, on October 1, 1949, of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and his rejection of Chiang's desperate proposal for a division of the country at the Yangzi River, the lines of the former Sung dynasty. The brief and turbulent Republican period in China, a period only thirty-eight years long, came abruptly to a close. For some Chinese as well as outside observers, it ended as suddenly and unexpectedly as the long dynastic history of the country ended in the 1911 revolution. For many, it was viewed as equally inevitable.

ICONOCLASM AND THE INTELLECTUAL RENAISSANCE

The late Qing and early Republican years in Chinese history were aptly characterized by Wu Yue, a revolutionary from Anhui, as a "season of assassins."[19] It was an age of violent terrorism and valiant heroism. Yet it was also a time of significant intellectual creativity and achievement. The creation of a new social order—indeed, of a new humanity—was the common goal of all the intellectuals of the age.[20] As Jerome Grieder has commented, prior to the 1911 revolution, Chinese intellectuals, whether monarchists or republicans, had an ebul-

lient, naive optimism that political change would quickly translate into a much broader and efficacious socio-cultural transformation.[21] Following the revolution, disappointments about the lack of change led to a sweeping critique of traditional Chinese civilization and the cultural ethos that informed such individual and collective resistance to progress. Within many circles, attention came to be focused less on new political structures and more on the development of a new culture. Reversing the logic of most pre-revolutionary arguments, many intellectuals began to maintain that a distinctly new and modern Chinese culture would eventually provide an adequate foundation for the creation of a more efficient and just political order.

"The New Culture Movement" (Xin wenhua yundong) refers to the decade or so of intense intellectual activity, usually dated from 1915, that was directed toward a comprehensive reappraisal of Chinese cultural traits and practices. Labeled "the Chinese Renaissance" (Zhongguo wenyi fuxing) by the scholar Hu Shi (1891–1962), the period was marked by a critical, iconoclastic spirit. It was a time in which intellectuals systematically doubted everything in order, finally, to believe in something. Challenging Chinese intellectuals not to shy away from a penetrating examination of their nation's history and culture, Chen Duxiu declared boldly in 1915:

> We indeed do not know which of our traditional institutions may be fit for survival in the modern world. I would rather see the ruin of our traditional "national quintessence" than have our race of the present and future extinguished because of its unfitness for survival. Alas, the Babylonians are gone; of what use is their civilization to them now? As a Chinese maxim says, "If the skin does not exist, what can the hair adhere to?" The world continually progresses and will not stop. All those who cannot change themselves and keep pace with it are unfit for survival and will be eliminated by the processes of natural selection.[22]

As Chen's statement suggests, the concepts of evolution and natural selection fired the imagination of Chinese intellectuals in the early twentieth century. According to James Reeve Pusey, it was the work of Charles Darwin, rather than that of Immanuel Kant, G. W. F. Hegel, or Karl Marx, that first revolutionized Chinese concepts of history: "It was Darwin who 'proved' progress, who brought 'scientific proof' that the world was 'evolving' and, more important, 'evolving upwards.'"[23] Hu Shi argued that the idea of social evolution was compelling to Chinese intellectuals because it resonated with their humanistic optimism that the course of events could be altered and a brighter future realized despite China's desperate circumstances.[24] Interest in social evolution was fueled by important translations of western literature by Yan Fu (1853–1921) and other literary scholars. Works such as T. H. Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics,* Herbert Spencer's *A Study of Sociology,* J. S. Mill's *On Liberty,* and Montesquieu's *De l'espirit des lois* became widely available.[25] Those students who had returned from studies in Japan, the United States, and Europe were able to interpret the unique Chinese story within the broader context of an evolving human story. Most returned to China with an empowering sense that they could actively create history and help save their country from extinction.[26]

Education at the feet of "Mr. Science" and "Mr. Democracy" was thought by most to be the key for the creation of a new people. Accordingly, there were new initiatives in the field of adult vocational education, in order to train workers for positions in modern industry, and a new focus on higher education at the university level. The respected scholar Cai Yuanpei (1876–1940) returned in 1916 from four years in Germany and France to assume the chancellorship of the National University of Beijing. He took immediate steps to restructure the university on a European model, recruiting a diverse and qualified faculty who were promised academic freedom and participation in curricular decisions. Both the American philosopher and educator John Dewey (1859–1952) and the English philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) accepted invitations to become visiting lecturers for a year. University enrollment increased markedly as professors and students considered together creative new possibilities for cultural syntheses between the East and the West. Despite opposition from some literary scholars and translators like Yan Fu and Lin Shu (1852–1924), most educators affirmed the need for a literary revolution and the adoption of the vernacular form of Chinese *(baihua)* for all contemporary literature. In fact, in 1920, following an appeal by

the National Alliance of Educational Associations, the Ministry of Education ordered that all textbooks written in the ancient classical language *(wenyan)* be abandoned in public schools.

University iconoclasts associated with the New Culture Movement also proceeded to sharply attack the Confucian heritage, traditional Chinese family relationships, and popular religious superstitions. Numerous prominent scholars denounced Confucianism as the product of an agrarian and feudal society of the ancient past. Confucianists, they argued, merely encouraged submission to superiors instead of critical thinking and independent action; emphasized family patterns and expectations rather than individual potentialities; valued hierarchy and inequality rather than egalitarianism; and reinforced tradition while suppressing innovation. As John K. Fairbank has commented,

> The attack on the old Confucian order of hierarchy and status denied the validity of the ancient "three bonds," the subordination of subject to ruler, of son to father, and of wife to husband. It denounced the three corresponding virtues—loyalty to superiors, filiality, and female subjection—as props of despotism in both state and family. The anti-Confucianists attacked the tyranny of parents, their arrangements of marriages, and the subordination of youth to family.[27]

In a stinging rebuke of tradition, the popular writer Lu Xun (1881–1936), for example, declared that "Chinese culture is a culture of serving one's masters who are triumphant at the cost of the misery of the multitudes."[28] Thus convicted, intellectuals extended their reexamination and "reorganization of the heritage" *(zhengli guogu)* to virtually every field of academic endeavor, from literary criticism and the arts to history, philosophy, science, and so forth.

Yet although many of the scholars involved in the debates of this period were influenced by the West, they were certainly not uncritical of western civilization. The horrors of World War I in Europe, they pointed out, prevented any simplistic exaltation of all things western. As Guy S. Alitto has observed, Liang Qichao (1873–1929), Zhang Jiasen (or Zhang Junmai, who published in English under the name of Carsun or C. S. Chang; 1886–1969), and Liang Shuming (1893–1977) all articulated a more conservative position vis-à-vis the adoption of western culture.[29] Such intellectuals feared that any "cultural synthesis" might ultimately destroy the uniquely valuable elements of traditional Chinese culture, elements that indeed had universal significance for humankind. Liang Shuming's *Dong Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* (Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies) became a classic statement of the problem from a conservative perspective.[30] Liang argued that China was not simply "behind" the West in its historical development but on an altogether different and more efficacious cultural track. Wu Zhihui (1864–1953), Guomindang leader and a longtime friend of Cai Yuanpei, responded unequivocally by characterizing Liang Shuming as a "useless creature of the 17th century."[31]

Most intellectuals of the New Culture Movement summarily dismissed religious beliefs and practices as worthless remnants of a prescientific feudal society or unfortunate survivals from humanity's psychological childhood. Accordingly, Chinese popular religion as well as Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity were all devalued in the forging of a new national and global culture. Nevertheless, as Chow Tse-tsung has indicated, in the earliest years of the reform movement, religion was not a primary target of attack.[32] A negative view of religious commitments was implicit in many criticisms leveled in 1913 against the attempt to make Confucianism the state religion during the presidency of Yuan Shikai. Again, in 1916, anti-religious sentiments surfaced when Kang Youwei urged the parliament and President Li Yuanhong (1864–1928) to adopt a similar Confucian proposal in order to unify the country. On both occasions, a number of intellectuals took the opportunity to characterize religion as primitive superstition based on fear and ignorance and to describe religious adherents as dogmatic and divisive. Chen Duxiu, for example, while claiming that "the value of a religion is in direct proportion to the extent of its benefit to the society"[33] and urging the Chinese people "to cultivate the lofty and majestic character of Jesus,"[34] also finally charged that "all religions are useless as instruments of government and education. They are to be classed with the other discarded idols of a past age."[35]

Cai Yuanpei's public lecture on religion at the National University of Beijing in 1917 set the tone for many intellectuals. Cai argued that the Chinese mentality was not favorable to the attitudes and sentiments of religion and that the religious institutions of the world had only obstructed the progressive development of the human race. As Hu Shi has indicated, Cai ventured to propose a more acceptable substitute for religious commitment:

> He thought that religion was essentially a product of the instinctive love for beauty and sublimity, and that it might be replaced by a universal education in aesthetics, a training which should lead men to love the beautiful and the sublime in human conduct as well as in nature.[36]

In the midst of continuing controversy about the place of religion in Chinese society, the convening in Beijing in the spring of 1922 of the World's Student Christian Federation sparked an intense anti-Christian campaign as well as a more organized nationwide anti-religion movement. A "Great Federation of Anti-Religionists" (Fei zongjiao da tongmeng) was established with leadership from both the left wing of the Guomindang and the fledgling Communist Party.[37] The Federation sponsored educational efforts that sought to label all forms of religious belief and activity as fundamentally irrational and to identify the Christian religion, in particular, as both un-Chinese and unscientific. As Levenson observes, in the seventeenth century Christianity was widely rejected by the Chinese for not being traditional and Confucian enough; ironically, in the early twentieth century it was rejected for not being scientific and modern enough.[38] Many intellectuals charged not only that Christianity was a foreign spiritual tradition ill-suited to the Chinese people, but that it represented a naive theistic worldview increasingly rejected by scientific minds everywhere.

In concert with more organized efforts to eliminate religious practice came more specific attacks on both Christian teaching and the institutional church. According to Zhang Jiasen, doctrinally, Christianity was seen as too unscientific because of its teachings on miracles and the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It was contrary to logic because of its intractable theodicy problem (i.e., a good Creator

God and an evil world). Christian faith was contrary to modern social theories because its spiritual emphasis on reliance on God and on heavenly rewards neglected human capabilities for social reformation and advancement within this world. Finally, it was not suitable for Chinese culture because Christianity's foreign character was an unnatural and potentially dangerous basis for a national renaissance.

Institutionally speaking, according to Zhang, the Christian church was portrayed as a hypocritical organization with a terrible history of contributing to human oppression and war while preaching that one "love thy neighbor." Thus it was seen as supporting unbridled capitalism in China and throughout the developing world, but maintained little interest in more just and sustainable solutions of social and economic reconstruction. The church was interpreted as an agent of western colonialism both because of its past function as a religious vanguard for imperialistic governments and because of its continuing insensitivities to the national integrity of the Chinese people. It was understood to be given to corrupt methods of proselytization because of its various ingenious ways of tricking and seducing poor and uneducated people into converting to Christianity. And finally, according to Zhang, the church was said to be made up of persons of low moral standards because of its many "rice Christians," who professed faith merely for personal gain.[39] Chen Duxiu, for example, while complaining about the numerous "rice Christians," also queried critically in 1920:

> Jesus said, "Every one that listens to this teaching of mine and does not act upon it may be compared to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain poured down, the rivers rose, the winds blew and struck that house, and it fell; and great was its downfall" (Matt. 7:26–27).
>
> Are the Christians of the world all like the foolish man or not? We need not speak about those who look upon preaching as a means of livelihood. In every country there are many professed Christians. Why do they not oppose the unchristian acts of militarists and the moneyed? And why do they, instead, connive at the injustices practiced by them? They see the "House of Prayer for all the nations" turned into "a den of robbers," and are indifferent. They hold tenaciously to frivolous traditions as if they were the weightiest doctrines. In my view, these fool-

ish men, and not the anti-Christian scientists, are the real destroyers of Christianity. The responsibility for its destruction should be on their shoulders.[40]

Some intellectuals in the Republican period, of course, were willing to acknowledge that western Christian missionaries had accomplished a modest measure of good in China and could continue to contribute to national reconstruction. However, a far greater number concluded that Christianity was tainted beyond redemption by western imperialism; that it was inappropriately emphasized in the curriculum of too many mission schools, to the detriment of the overall educational needs of the students; and that, with the advances of modern science, the outdated theistic religion would ultimately disappear in the Middle Kingdom, as elsewhere in the world. The long-term outlook for Buddhism, Christianity's major religious competitor in China, was commonly judged to be even bleaker.

ASSESSING THE VITALITY OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

The study of Buddhist philosophy was something of a vogue in intellectual circles in the late Qing, as the scholar-reformer Liang Qichao testified.[41] Nevertheless, the religion as popularly practiced was often subjected to harsh criticisms. Even for many intellectuals for whom the challenging subtleties and intricacies of Chinese Buddhist philosophy held some appeal, Buddhism as an institutional religion offered very little. A moderate number of educated persons were appreciative of the Buddhist heritage and hoped expectantly for Buddhist reform and revitalization, but many more concluded that there were few Chinese Buddhist masters of ability anymore, that the average monk had little education or moral virtue, and that institutional Buddhism was effectively and justifiably moribund. Most members of the Chinese sangha were seen to be primarily engaged in performing rites for the dead for personal financial gain and were judged largely incapable of contributing much of significance toward national goals.

Accordingly, in the waning years of the Qing dynasty, some political reformers proposed that the considerable assets of Buddhist monasteries be appropriated by the government for use in modernization efforts. Zhang Zhidong, for example, in his 1898 *Quan xue pian* (Exhortation to Learning), suggested that the Qing court confiscate Buddhist monasteries and Daoist temples—up to 70 percent of their property—to support general educational reform. He even argued that this action would serve in the long run to benefit Buddhism and Daoism. Zhang reasoned that because the property confiscations would reinforce Confucianism as the guiding political ideology for the country, the more stable central government that resulted could subsequently protect and encourage the revitalization of all religious traditions, including Buddhism and Daoism.[42]

Liang Qichao, who studied Buddhist philosophy with his friend Tan Sitong (1865–1898), is typical of the intellectuals who expressed mixed feelings about Buddhism's potential place in a modern China. If Buddhism, he suggested, could distance itself from superstition and emphasize its rational temper and beneficial spirit toward the world, it could actively contribute to the nation's future. If not, its influence could only be a detrimental one. Acknowledging Buddhism's historically important position within Chinese society, Liang commented:

> In this unclean and evil world, men developed all sorts of vexation, frustration, grief, and sorrow; seeking a refuge that could offer security of life and peace of mind, men with some spiritual proclivity naturally fled to Buddhism. Buddhism, by nature, was neither renunciatory nor negativistic, but men who studied it faithfully and could truly maintain it with a positive spirit [were so few] that it would have been difficult to find even one or two, apart from Tan Sitong. . . .
>
> The Chinese had always been quite badly tainted with the poison of superstition; as Buddhism became prevalent, all sorts of belief in evil spirits and unorthodox doctrines as well as methods for public deception and popular delusion were revived in its wake. . . . If this [trend] continues unchanged, then Buddhism will become a great obstacle in our intellectual world, and even those of us who have always treated Buddhistic teachings with respect will henceforth be tongue-tied and afraid to discuss it any more.

> Jiang Fangzhen has said: ". . . Our country's new turning point hereafter should also develop from two directions: one, the emotional, which [involves] a new literature and a new art, and the other, the rational, which [involves] a new Buddhism." I very much agree with his words. There is no doubt that Buddhism in China, which could not be suppressed or eradicated even by those who hated it intensely, will always be an important factor in our social thinking; whether this is beneficial or baneful to our society depends solely on whether the new Buddhists appear.[43]

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social reformers of many different persuasions wondered with Liang Qichao whether "new" expressions of Buddhism would appear. They openly questioned whether or not the ancient religion had enough vitality left to respond to the changes being wrought in the modern world. Throughout its long history in China, from the middle of the Han dynasty (206 B.C.E.–220 C.E.) forward, the Sangha had experienced numerous cycles of growth and decline. Significantly, from the Ming period on, in times of crisis and decay it had been most notably the Buddhist laity who activated renewal movements. Of course, accomplished Buddhist masters had continued to achieve broad attention, to be widely revered, and to help stimulate and guide lay activities and organizations. The health of monastic and of lay Buddhism were always closely interrelated.[44] However, associations of devoted lay followers had come to play an increasingly important role in Buddhist life.

Throughout the Tang period (618–907), lay associations in China commonly emphasized the planning of Buddhist festivals, the preservation of scripture, and sūtra recitation, but by the time of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127), the primary focus of most lay associations was the communal recitation of the Buddha's name. As Chün-fang Yü has explained, "During their periodic meetings members recited together the name of the Amitābha Buddha and transferred the merits thus accrued to their speedy rebirth in the Western Paradise. The members also engaged in philanthropic activities, but invocation of the Buddha *(nian fo)* was the main purpose."[45]

In contrast to their earlier prototypes, these groups were more frequently comprised of commoners than members of the upper class. Moreover, they tended to be rather informally constituted and loosely organized. By late Ming times, however, lay Buddhist groups were usually much more highly structured. As Edward Ch'ien comments,

> Organization and group consciousness also characterized the highly syncretic lay Buddhist world of late Ming, during which lay Buddhist associations proliferated in number. . . . These associations were rather unlike their earlier counterparts, which consisted of an indeterminate number of people meeting at unspecified times. By contrast, the lay Buddhist associations of late Ming were formally established institutions with definite rules for both group conduct and individual behavior. . . . Lay Buddhist associations grew numerically and organizationally, involving both the common people and also the educated literati-gentry elite, who, though steeped in the Confucian tradition, embraced with all seriousness certain Buddhist principles and practices in their daily lives.[46]

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, while large numbers of Buddhists explored doctrine and ritual practice within these lay associations, many other Chinese became familiar with elements of the religion through popular literature, syncretic religious traditions, or millenarian sects and secret societies. Chinese novels such as *Jin Ping Mei* (Golden Lotus), *Xiyou ji* (Journey to the West), and *Shuihu zhuan* (Water Margin) gave both readers and illiterate listeners opportunities to learn about Buddhist values, practices, and personalities. Simply written morality books *(shan shu)* offering ethical maxims, lists of good and evil deeds, and expected merits and demerits reinforced Buddhist understandings of karma and of merit-making possibilities for the laity.

Beyond the unreflective syncretism of Chinese popular religion, more sophisticated syncretic religious groups such as the Three Teachings Sect (San jiao) of Lin Zhaoen (1517–1598) contributed to the broadening of a sinicized Buddhism.[47] Lin's own goal was to develop a single method of mind cultivation that effectively integrated the insights of the Confucian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions. Finally, many sectarian religious groups, such as the Maitreya Society (Mile

tuan), the White Cloud Sect (Baiyun zong), and the White Lotus Sect (Bailian jiao) extended Buddhism's appeal. Devotionally focused and highly syncretic, these sects made adherents familiar with certain elements of the Buddhist tradition, especially Maitreyan eschatology.[48] The White Lotus Sect, for example, synthesized accounts of a deity known as Xi Wang Mu (Mother Ruler of the West) with traditional Buddhist expectations about transmigration, the decline of the Dharma through three periods of history, a paradisaical Western Pure Land, and the Buddha of the Future, Maitreya. In similar ways, members of most Chinese secret societies encountered diverse elements of Buddhist practice and belief. Rites of the Triad Society, for example, so named for its ideal of harmony between Heaven, Earth, and humankind, included explicit references to various Buddhist deities.

IN THE DAYS OF THE LAST DYNASTY

During the Qing era, Lamaism (Lama jiao), a form of Tantric Buddhism integrated with elements of indigenous Tibetan religion, expanded its influence in China through special court patronage. It had once been recognized as the state religion by the Mongol rulers of the Yuan dynasty (1280–1368). Largely for political reasons, support for the tradition had also been extended by Ming rulers. As the monk Dongchu has observed, the Qing emperors also aimed to maintain good relations with the Mongols and Tibetans by showing courtesies to the Dalai Lama and other venerated "living buddhas." Governmental assistance was provided for the construction of numerous Tibetan temples throughout the country, including the large and important Huangjiao si in Beijing, constructed in 1651 to house four hundred Lamaist monks.[49] Also generally favored by the court was Chan Buddhism, especially the Linji school. Nevertheless, virtually all the Qing emperors were interested in promoting religious harmony and encouraging the ecumenical impulses evident within post-Tang Buddhism. Chan remained the dominant tradition, but Pure Land

devotionalism was widely practiced in monasteries associated with all Buddhist schools.

Lay Buddhist associations continued to be important in the mid and late Qing, with their lay leaders enjoying even greater freedom from sangha control.[50] Yet in many parts of China, the Buddhist monastic establishment struggled in light of declining popular support for its operations. The Qing government sponsored a new printing of the Chinese Buddhist canon, completed in 1738, as well as its translation into Manchu, completed in 1790. At the same time, facing new financial exigencies itself, the court was becoming considerably less generous with institutional Buddhism than had been true under the benevolent paternalism of Ming and early Qing emperors. Moreover, the government sought more strictly to control ordination and to reduce the number of Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, charging that most were not authentic spiritual seekers but mere social parasites. For example, the fourth Qing emperor, Qianlong (1711–1799), declared in a 1739 edict:

> The ruling princes of old often issued decrees calling for the screening of monks and Daoist priests. Certainly this was because there was indiscriminate mixture of the good and bad among the Buddhist and Daoists. Those among them who shut themselves from the world to practice secretly the monastic discipline probably number but one or two in a hundred, while those who are idlers and loafers, joining the sangha under false pretenses just to seek for food and clothing, and those who are criminals and draft dodgers, fearing punishment and concealing themselves to escape the clutches of the law, are probably countless.
>
> If one male does not farm, some people will starve; if one female does not weave, some people will be cold. The addition of one new monk means the decrease of one farmer. This group does not farm but it still eats, it does not weave but it still wears clothes. Moreover, it consumes choice foods and wears elegant clothing shamelessly, as if these were its proper due. Therefore, the income of two or three hard-working farmers is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of one monk or priest. Since these monks and priests waste the wealth of the people and contaminate the customs of the land, and since they are parasites in society and a disgrace to their religion, certainly they should not be permitted to

> increase in numbers without cease. However, since these religions have been transmitted for a long time and their followers are numerous, it is difficult to proscribe them at once. Therefore we command that the system of issuing monk certificates be again practiced, so that there may be an investigation and registration of the monastic order now, for the ultimate purpose of gradually decreasing their numbers in the future. This is our purpose in administering this business.[51]

In addition to encountering more hostile government policies on religion, the sangha faced two other significant challenges in the late Qing. The first was monastery reconstruction following the devastating Taiping Rebellion. The rebellion was led by Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), a visionary from Guangdong who was influenced by Confucian utopianism and Protestant Christianity. In 1851, after claiming to have experienced revelations of his true identity as the son of God and younger brother of Jesus, Hong formally declared his revolutionary intention to establish in China a "Heavenly Kingdom of Great Peace" (Taiping tianguo).[52] Serving as "the Heavenly King" (Tian wang), Hong soon organized a theocratic state that unified religious, civil, and military command. Basing his utopian teachings on his readings of Christian scriptures, he ordered the communalization of all privately owned land and property. The equality of the sexes was advanced, cohabitation restricted, and strict ethical codes formulated that prohibited opium, tobacco, wine, prostitution, foot-binding, slavery, gambling, and polygamy. The reading of Confucian classics was forbidden and a new civil service examination system designed around the Christian Bible and other Taiping literature. An intemperate crusade against ancestor veneration and idol worship was undertaken. In the process, Daoist and Buddhist monks were threatened and killed, and monuments and monasteries defaced and destroyed. Yang Xiuqing (d. 1856), commander of the Taiping Grand Army, issued a proclamation in 1853 that read, in part:

> With regard to the temples and monasteries, where the Buddhist and Daoist monks stay, together with property possessed by brothels and gambling houses, it is much better that it should be distributed among the poor people of the villages. At present we are seizing the Buddhist and Daoist monks throughout the country and having them beheaded, and we are inquiring into those who have been foremost in the building and repair of Buddhist temples, that we may have them apprehended likewise.[53]

Before the Qing government was able finally to end the rebellion in 1864, with the cooperation of western governments—a rebellion in which perhaps twenty million people died—the Taipings controlled an extensive area in south-central China, the very heartland of Chinese Buddhism. Citing the report on the region by the Hunanese scholar-general Zeng Guofan (1811–1872) that, because of the Taipings, "there is no Buddhist, Daoist, or city god temple that has not been burned and no idol that has not been destroyed," Dongchu concluded that the Taipings inflicted on Buddhism an almost fatal blow. In Guangdong and Guangxi, in particular, he stated, "not a Buddhist temple or Buddhist image was fortunate enough to escape damage."[54]

Buddhism's second major challenge was that presented by the Christian church. Christian missionaries posed a threat not to the external paraphernalia of institutional Buddhism but to its internal spirituality and popular support. The Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610) and his colleagues had labored under difficult circumstances to provide a foundation for Christian missionary endeavors in China. As Chan Kim-kwong has noted, hoping to appeal to the ruling elite and Confucian literati, Ricci's mission strategy was to commend Confucianism as a philosophy compatible with Christianity while repudiating Daoism and especially Buddhism.[55] The strategy had limited success because it remained in conflict with the popular understanding of the complementarity of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism. Nevertheless, despite firm and widespread opposition, especially among the intelligentsia, to any potential expansion of foreign Christian missions, the eventual edict of Qing emperor Kangxi (1654–1722) seemed to promise an atmosphere of respect and toleration. As the court declared in 1692,

> The Europeans are very quiet; they do not excite any disturbances in the provinces, they do no harm to anyone, they commit no crimes, and their doctrine has nothing in common with that of the false sects in the

> empire, nor has it any tendency to excite sedition. . . . We decide therefore that all temples dedicated to the Lord of heaven, in whatever place they may be found, ought to be preserved, and that it may be permitted to all who wish to worship this God to enter these temples, offer him incense, and perform the ceremonies practiced according to ancient custom by the Christians. Therefore let no one henceforth offer them any opposition.[56]

This spirit of goodwill, however, did not survive the so-called Rites Controversy of the early eighteenth century, when the Roman Catholic pope and the Chinese emperor each attacked the authority of the other to determine the character of the Christian mission in China.[57] As a result of the pope's decision to denounce any accommodation with ancestor veneration and all rituals associated with it, as well as the Chinese emperor's corresponding decision to expel missionaries who refused to accept such accommodations, the early Roman Catholic mission in China was virtually abandoned. When the first Protestant missionary Robert Morrison (1782–1834) reached the southern port city of Guangzhou in 1807, he was able to begin only very slowly, after language study and without legal status, to spread the gospel to the Chinese people in the area.

Morrison's pioneer successors in mission continued to push the limits of government toleration. Karl F. A. (Charles) Gützlaff (1803–1851) of the Netherlands Missionary Society made several missionary voyages along the coast of China from 1831 through 1833. A subsequent attempt to travel inland via the Min River was repelled by the Chinese military. It was only after the treaty of Nanjing, at the close of the Opium War, that foreigners were able to penetrate the previously inaccessible interior of the mainland. As mission historian Stephen Neill has commented on these developments,

> Little was said in the treaty about religion, but it was clear that missionaries no less than merchants could take advantage of the privileges accorded to foreigners. On the whole, while deploring the war and doubting the wisdom of the treaty, missionaries took the view that what was deplorable in itself had been overruled by divine providence with a view to the opening up of China to the Gospel. This manifestation of western aggressiveness was bitterly resented at the time by the Chinese, and the feelings it aroused have never quite died away. That Christian work seemed so plainly to enter in the wake of gunboats and artillery was to be a permanent handicap to it in China.[58]

In the second half of the nineteenth century, almost every missionary society in Europe and the United States began organizing for a major new evangelization effort in China. Early missionary endeavors were limited and primarily restricted to the coastal areas. As late as 1865, Protestant missionaries were located in only seven of the eighteen provinces. However, in that year the English missionary James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), who had himself served in China from 1853 through 1860, founded the China Inland Mission (now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship), which became extremely influential in shaping an effective approach to mission in the Chinese context. Taylor called for a mission that would be conservative theologically but interdenominational; that would enlist for mission work in China all Christians of good character willing to serve, rather than only highly educated professionals; that would be directed primarily from the mission field in China, rather than from distant home offices in Europe or the United States; that would encourage missionaries in the field to dress according to Chinese custom and to identify as much as possible with the indigenous culture of the people; and that would be more concerned with personal evangelism than other forms of Christian education and service.[59] By the turn of the century, the China Inland Mission and other missionary organizations were able to report considerable success both in recruiting personnel for overseas service in China and in establishing fledgling mission churches throughout the mainland. By 1906, there were more than seventy different independent Protestant mission societies at work in China, with nearly four thousand foreign missionaries.[60]

From its inception, an important dimension of the modern mission to China was the publication of Christian books and tracts to be used in preaching, evangelism, and education. Perhaps not surprisingly, many of those materials not only described classical Christian teaching (calling people to "the Way, the Truth, and the Life") but offered pointed criticisms of other religious beliefs and practices of

the Chinese people (calling people away from falsehood and perversion). As Ralph R. Covell observes, an analysis of the content of the most widely distributed missionary publications among the nearly eight hundred that were produced from 1810 to 1873 reveals that Buddhism was the religious tradition that the majority of Christian writers most explicitly wished to condemn. "The Protestant missionaries," writes Covell, "were one with the Jesuits in finding nothing of any help in the teaching of Buddhism. It was a foreign intrusion into the religious scene and was worthy only of condemnation."[61]

Only a very few Christian missionaries in the 1800s, like the English Baptist Timothy Richard (1845–1919), articulated a more inclusive theology. Arriving in China in 1869, Richard sought to define an approach to mission that was based more on the striking continuities between Buddhism and Christianity than on their often highlighted discontinuities. Indeed, he preferred to think of Mahāyāna as "not Buddhism, properly so-called, but an Asiatic form of the same Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in Buddhist nomenclature."[62] Richard once stated:

> Let no man conclude . . . that I think lightly of Buddhism. On the contrary I hold it to be one of the noblest efforts, on one of the grandest scales the world has ever seen, of men trying to solve some of the greatest problems of human existence. I hold also that in its search after a better life it has given comfort to untold millions of our race by that light of nature which the Apostle Paul says is from God. . . . Notwithstanding its weak points it has its strong ones too. Its aims to save all mankind and even all living beings; its doctrines of repentance, faith, love and self-sacrifice; its teaching of the utter vanity of the best in this world, as compared with the future, and an unfailing recompense of our deeds, whether good or ill; its teaching of the supreme importance of union with the One Mind of the universe, though often vague and almost forgotten, are still truths dear to every Christian heart. If we can see them more clearly than the Buddhists, we should pity them, because they have not had the same privileges as ourselves. Although Buddhism has not succeeded in its great purpose, yet owing to its experiments the world is much richer today than it was.[63]

The vast majority of Protestant missionaries, in contrast, maintained an exclusivist theological perspective and saw little of value in Buddhism. As Whalen Lai points out, having already derisively condemned Roman Catholic monks and nuns as uncaring and immoral, it was easy for Protestant missionaries to excoriate Chinese Buddhist monastics.[64] Gützlaff thought Chinese Buddhism's "orgies of idolatry" repulsive and referred to its sacred island of Putuo Shan, which he visited in 1833, as an "infamous seat of abomination."[65] And although Ernest J. Eitel, one of the first missionaries to study Chinese Buddhism in any systematic way, was somewhat appreciative of its scriptural injunctions to be compassionate to other beings, he judged the religion to be fundamentally abhorrent, an "unnatural and monstrous" tradition, and its priesthood among the most ignorant, indolent, and "wretched specimens of humanity, more devoted to opium smoking than any other class in China."[66] Writing in 1884, Eitel concluded straightforwardly:

> Whether we look upon Buddhism as a system of religion, morality or philosophy, we cannot help observing everywhere fundamental errors directly antagonistic to a healthy development of either the intellectual or moral faculties of mankind. . . . Buddhism is intellectually defective. It arose from a feeling of spiritual bankruptcy and never recovered its mental equilibrium. It is therefore essentially a religion of sullen despair, based on the total obliteration of a healthy faith in the actual constitution of things, penetrated by a spirit of morose abandon, mental and moral. . . . Buddhism is in fact a system of religion without hope and strictly speaking even without God, a system of morality without a conscience, a system of philosophy which wears either the mask of transcendental mysticism or of nihilistic cynicism. Again, Buddhism is further intellectually weak because of its prodigious fondness for the miraculous. . . . [It] is utterly incapable of comprehending or appreciating the claims of reality and the demands of the present.
>
> Morally also Buddhism is found sadly wanting. Though professing to destroy self, its system of morality is pervaded by a spirit of calculating selfishness, its social virtues are essentially negative and strikingly unfruitful in good works. . . . It is a science without inspiration, a religion with-

> out God, a body without a spirit, unable to regenerate, cheerless, cold, dead and deplorably barren of results. Can these dry bones live?[67]

Among the more widely respected of the many Christian mission leaders who concurred with the negative answer implied in Eitel's rhetorical question was Joseph Edkins, a missionary-scholar first associated with the Evangelical Missionary Society of Basel and later with the London Missionary Society. Edkins claimed that, despite Buddhism's long influence on the Chinese, its intellectual vigor was dead beyond any hope of resurrection. Buddhism's superstitions and idolatry, he argued, would continue to be an effective barrier against its civilized advance and true illumination. Therefore, he concluded in 1893, "Buddhism is not so powerful in China as to cause alarm to the Christian missionary, in view of the coming struggle which he anticipates. . . . Buddhism makes no effort that can for a moment compare with the work which Christianity has done for mankind."[68] The ancient religion had served merely as a *praeparatio evangelica* for the Christian gospel. Although Buddhism was a part of China's past, Edkins maintained, it had no capacity for being a religion of China's future. Reflecting on his own experience in thirty-five years of mission work in China, Arthur H. Smith similarly concurred that Buddhism had long ago "degenerated into a mere form." "Its priests," he wrote in 1908, "like those of Daoism, are for the most part idle, ignorant, vicious parasites on the body politic. The religion, like many of its temples, is in a condition of hopeless collapse."[69]

TAKING UP THE CHALLENGES

In the waning years of the Qing dynasty, the Buddhist community struggled to respond both to the disruption and devastation brought about by the Taiping Rebellion and to the piercing criticisms by Christian missionaries of the religion's doctrines, spiritual practices, and institutional forms. Unquestionably, the most important attempt to respond to these challenges was that of the remarkable lay Buddhist leader Yang Wenhui (1837–1911), also known by his courtesy name of Renshan. Yang was an energetic young man who one day, at

the age of twenty-six, happened to purchase a copy of *Dasheng qixin lun* (The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna). The text sparked his interest in Buddhism, and he soon began to study other popular Mahāyāna literature enthusiastically, including the *Jingang jing* (Diamond Sūtra) and *Lengyan jing* (Sūraṅgama Sūtra). His granddaughter, Zhao Yang Buwei, later reported that Yang so immediately became preoccupied with his Buddhist studies that his family was concerned that he might ultimately choose to become a monk.[70]

In 1864, immediately after Qing forces commanded by Zeng Guofan took control of the Taiping capital of Nanjing, Zeng appointed Yang Wenhui supervisor for the construction of the Zongli Yamen (Office for the Management of the Business of All Foreign Countries) in the city. Thus it was in Nanjing that he settled permanently, and that he and other Buddhist friends eventually established the important Jinling Scriptural Press (Jinling kejing chu). Yang was convinced that any adequate response to the challenges that Buddhists were facing first required that they become more knowledgeable about the tradition's sacred literature. Unfortunately, many of the great Buddhist libraries in south-central China had been destroyed by fire during the Taiping Rebellion. The monasteries themselves were being actively restored, but the libraries needed to be replaced and their contents made more accessible if Buddhism was to continue to be a vital force in modern China. As Welch aptly observes,

> What motivated Yang was not the sight of monasteries in decay (because many of those he saw were just being rebuilt), but the traditional wish to gain merit by filling the shortage of Buddhist books.
>
> But if Yang and his friends had little reason to consider Buddhism decaying, they must have become increasingly aware of the contrast offered by Christianity, more and more of whose evangelists they could see about them after the treaties of 1858 and 1860. It is a significant coincidence that 1866, the year Yang began his printing venture, was also the year when the first party of the China Inland Mission took advantage of the newly won right of Europeans to live in the interior rather than in the treaty ports. Letter-perfect in the gospel, they expounded it not intramurally to other clerics, but on street corners to

audiences of common people. How many Buddhist monks knew their scripture so well? And of the few that did, how many were expounding it to lay audiences? Yet one of their traditional obligations was to spread the Dharma among all sentient beings. Such thoughts must have reinforced Yang's determination to make the scriptures available.[71]

The Jinling Scriptural Press ultimately published more than a million copies of Buddhist works. During the early years of the press's existence, Yang Wenhui provided most of the operational funding himself by working at his official post during the day. In the evenings, Dongchu states, "Yang studied Buddhism devotedly. In addition, he collated and prepared scriptures for publication and distribution. He chanted scriptures, recited the Buddha's name, or sat in silent meditation, often until he fell asleep in the early hours of the morning."[72] In 1878, Yang accepted an appointment extended by Zeng Guofan's son, Zeng Jize (1839–1890), to serve as a staff member during his term as ambassador to Great Britain. During two separate tours at the embassy, Yang spent a total of about five years in London, where he enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about western technology and civilization. He also established important contacts with scholars interested in Chinese Buddhism, such as Max Müller, the renowned professor of comparative philology and religion, and Nanjio Bunyiu, Müller's able Japanese student, who later helped Yang retrieve from Japan Buddhist texts that were not included in the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

After Yang Wenhui returned to China from England in 1888, he was introduced by Timothy Richard to the Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), the revered lay Buddhist leader from Ceylon who had founded the Maha Bodhi Society in Columbo in 1891.[73] Following Dharmapala's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September 1893, the Ceylonese leader was visiting Japan and China in the hope of gaining support for his plan to restore Buddhist holy sites in India and to organize a cooperative international Buddhist mission to India.[74] Dharmapala thought it should be a grave concern of Buddhists everywhere that since the fifteenth century the ancient Indian religion had almost vanished in the land of its origin. In a late December meeting that the Christian missionary-scholar Joseph Edkins had helped arrange with monks at the Longhua si near Shanghai, Dharmapala stated to those assembled:

> Today there are nearly four hundred and seventy five millions of people who acknowledge the Buddha as their Teacher. A thousand years ago almost the whole of Asia was under the benign sway of the gentle teachings of this great Teacher.
>
> About seven hundred years ago Buddhism was totally destroyed in India by the Mohammedan conquerors; and as long as they were in power, Buddhism had no place in the land. Thousands of priests were killed, temples and sacred books destroyed, and those who escaped from these persecutions fled into the mountain countries of Nepal and Tibet and also to China. . . .
>
> Now there is no Buddhism in India, and my object in coming to this great country is to inform my Chinese co-religionists of this fact and to ask their support and sympathy for the rehabilitation of this religion. India gave you her religion and now I appeal to you to help her in her hour of need.
>
> The Christians, Mohammedans and Hindus (Brahmans) have their respective sacred places in Jerusalem, Mecca, and Puri under their guardianship; but to our sorrow, I find that the Buddhists have entirely forgotten their holy land.
>
> The Blessed Buddha addressing Ananda soon before his final passing away, said: "Ananda, there are four places, which my Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunīs, Upāsakas and Upāsikās should visit, and these places are, where the Tathāgata was born, where he attained anuttara-samyak-saṁbodhi, where he preached the Dharma-cakra, where he attained Nirvāṇa. A visit to these places will bring joy into their minds, and after their death they will be born in heaven."
>
> To restore these sacred sites, to station Bhikkhus from all Buddhist countries in these places, to train them as Buddhist missionaries to preach Buddhism to the people of India, to translate again from Chinese the Buddhist scriptures into the Indian languages, is our object, and to carry out this great scheme, we have formed a great Buddhist Society, called the Maha-Bodhi-Society, on an international basis. All the Buddhist countries, viz. Japan, Siam, Burma, Tibet, Ceylon, Chitta-

gong and Arakan have joined us in our work, and now I make this appeal to the Buddhists of China, whose illustrious predecessors, the great Faxian, Xuanzang and Yijing, have shed a lustre by their heroic devotion to Buddha and by their pilgrimages to the sacred land—the land of the Buddhas.[75]

Otto Franke, a representative from the German consulate who, along with Timothy Richard, accompanied Dharmapala to the monastery to serve as interpreter, reported that the visit was unproductive and discouraging.[76] The monks were curious about the Buddhist relics that Dharmapala brought with him, but hesitant about participating in any type of religious "society" that might appear suspicious to the Chinese government. Initially they offered to print and distribute a Chinese translation of Dharmapala's appeal. Eventually, however, as Whalen Lai has noted, the monks at the Longhua monastery became "so scared of being impeached by the government for 'illicit association' that they begged to be relieved of their initial promise to help."[77] Rather than recruit Chinese missionaries willing to go to India, Yang Wenhui recommended to Dharmapala an alternate plan more likely to succeed. Indian Buddhists could be recruited for advanced studies in China in order to prepare them for subsequent mission work among their own people. In the process of discussing such innovative ideas, both lay leaders expressed their wish that Buddhism be revitalized in Asia "in order to spread it throughout the world."[78]

By this time, Yang Wenhui was already attracting a number of able students, among them the gifted young political activist Tan Sitong, who later praised his teacher as one "who was widely versed in Buddhist texts and history."[79] Several years later, in 1898, to expand his work, Yang purchased a large estate in Nanjing that came to be known as "the Jetavana Hermitage" (Zhihuan jingshe). The property was acquired to house the Jinling Scriptural Press and also, in response to Dharmapala's appeal, an innovative school for the education of monks for global mission.[80] Eventually, a basic three-year curriculum of full-time studies was designed in Buddhist scripture, history, literature, and foreign language training, with the possibility for further advanced

work.[81] Especially remarkable was the fact that knowledgeable laypeople actually offered instruction in many subjects to ordained monks. A Buddhist Research Association (Fojiao yanjiu hui) was later founded that sponsored weekly public lectures, principally by Yang himself.

Because of financial difficulties, Yang Wenhui's innovative school survived only the 1908–1909 academic year. Yet even a partial list of those who were teachers or students there reveals the significance of the layman's efforts. Among faculty members were Dixian (1858–1932), the eminent Tiantai master and later abbot of Guanzong si, who served as dean of students *(xuejian)*, and Su Manshu (1884–1918), the poet, translator, and anti-Manchu revolutionary, who taught English.[82] Among the twenty-four students (twelve monks and twelve laymen) were Zhiguang (1889–1963), later the respected abbot of Dinghui si on Jiao Shan; Ouyang Jingwu (1871–1943), the brilliant lay Buddhist educator and leader of the revival of interest in the Weishi (Consciousness-Only) school; Mei Guangxi, who would later become one of Ouyang Jingwu's major financial supporters; and the controversial reformist monk Taixu.[83] Remembered as a model of lay Buddhist piety and as the principal initiator of the revitalization of Buddhism that began in the late Qing, Yang Wenhui died just before the Republican revolution in October 1911.[84]

In the early Republican period, the monastery rebuilding program that had begun to gain momentum in the last quarter of the nineteenth century continued, although it varied considerably by region. Lewis Hodous, writing in 1923, commented in particular on the newly completed monasteries in Fujian, and on the construction projects then underway in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, as well as in many large cities, including Beijing.[85] He also noted that there were a number of monasteries, especially in the Yangzi valley and in southern and western China, that still stood in ruins as a result of the Taiping Rebellion. From Shaanxi in the northwest to Sichuan in the west and Guangdong in the far south, many monasteries were either abandoned or poorly staffed and in a state of disrepair.

This is in basic harmony with the assessments of James B. Pratt and Johannes Prip-Møller. In a paper delivered before the Chinese

Social and Political Science Association in 1924, Pratt reported that in the southern city of Guangzhou, for example, most temples had been confiscated by the government and were being used by the military as barracks. A few lay Buddhist societies were active in the city, but their membership and activities were limited. North of the Yangzi valley, especially in Shandong, the Buddhist temples were often in poor condition and generally reflected as much Daoist as Buddhist influence and devotional practice. In Beijing, most temples and monasteries were in fair to excellent condition, but Pratt discovered few well-educated monks and little evidence of significant interaction between the monastic community and the laity.

In the northwest, in Shanxi, except for the sacred pilgrimage site of Wutai Shan, Buddhism appeared to be in no better condition than in Guangdong. In the provincial capital, Taiyuan, the only Buddhist temple was closed nearly all the time. Concluding with a pointed question, Pratt commented:

> In the smaller towns and villages one finds Daoist temples, but the Buddhist temples have either been made into schools or are falling to pieces. All over central Shanxi, in short, Buddhist temples and the Buddhist faith are quietly decaying. The most marked architectural features of the region are the great bottle-shaped tombs of former Buddhist abbots, mute witnesses to the fervor of the Buddhist faith in this region in a day long past. In some places one can count a score of these great tombs. They mark the graves of dead abbots; do they also mark the grave of a dead religion?[86]

In Shaanxi, according to Pratt, the poor conditions of Buddhist institutions did not differ greatly from those of Shanxi, except perhaps in the provincial capital of Xi'an.

In the central region of China in the 1920s and 1930s, in contrast, Buddhist monasteries were being actively repaired, rebuilt, and newly constructed. This work represented a considerable capital investment. In addition, the number of people active in the practice of Buddhism appears to have been considerable, and the communication and cooperation between the monastic and lay communities generally quite good. Pratt reported that from Sichuan in the west, with its impressive Emei Shan, eastward to Hubei, Hunan, Anhui, Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Fujian, the Buddhist temples and monasteries were largely well cared for and well populated.[87] "Hankou and Wuchang," he remarked, "are perhaps the most important centers of the so called Buddhist revival; while Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Ningbo and all the adjacent regions of Jiangsu and Zhejiang are filled with very living Buddhism. New temples are being constructed, old ones repaired and pilgrimages carried on, young monks are studying and old monks meditating, throughout all this region."[88]

Prip-Møller, reporting on his own studies of Buddhist monastic architecture between 1929 and 1933, explained the necessity of conducting research in central China by contrasting the vitality of Buddhism in that region to its condition elsewhere in the country. He further noted that virtually all the monasteries in the lower Yangzi valley bore witness to the extensive destruction caused by the Taiping rebels. As a result, a great many of the facilities were being totally or substantially rebuilt, although, according to Prip-Møller, only in a very few cases were they being restored "with anything like the same splendour as before."[89] In line with these reports highlighting Buddhist activity in the central region of the country, Welch notes that, by 1930, based on statistics said to have been compiled by the Chinese Buddhist Association, "there were twenty times more monks per capita in central China than in most of the northern and southern provinces."[90]

The Buddhist community maintained no effective organizational structure that bound together the independent monasteries and the individual abbots who were in charge of them. The vast majority of the five hundred thousand some monks in China during the Republican period lived in small hereditary temples *(zusun miao)* whose ownership remained within a "family" of monks that was created through tonsure, the ceremonial head-shaving by a master that initiated the monastic life.[91] The large public monasteries *(shifang conglin)*, which were owned by the entire sangha and whose leadership selection transcended tonsure relationships, represented only a small percentage of the approximately 100,000 temples and monasteries in which monks resided. In addition, about 225,000 nuns lived in more

than 130,000 nunneries—most of which were, obviously, very small, and provided for by particular families. Thus the total size of institutional Buddhism, along with its lack of a unified organizational structure, made it quite vulnerable to localized anti-religious activity and to governmental attempts to confiscate property in order to support educational or military aims.

In the early Republican period, especially during the first united front between the Guomindang and the Communist Party, the government often acted with no concern for the rights or interests of Buddhist communities. Government troops frequently damaged and looted monasteries, destroyed images, and converted temples into schools and other institutions. According to E. H. Cressy's research in Wuchang, for example, by the early 1930s, 65 of the city's 165 religious institutions—39 percent of its Buddhist and Daoist temples and monasteries—had been converted by the government to nonreligious purposes.[92] On the basis of a study of temples and monasteries in west China, D. S. Dye concluded in 1931 that only about 2.3 percent of the temples were being used exclusively for religious purposes; 2.9 percent had been demolished; 58 percent were being used at least in part for public projects such as hospitals or government bureaus; and 36.8 percent had been converted to private uses such as residences, factories, and business concerns. Dye reported:

> In many of these temples now diverted to other uses idols are still *in situ* and incense may be burned. Priests may be found in ones and twos in many, while in a few temples some tens of priests may still be found.
>
> The writer ventures a shrewd guess without data to support, that the functioning priest population of Chengdu temples does not exceed 30 percent of that which existed in March, 1911—two decades ago.[93]

Not infrequently, both Christian missionaries and Buddhist modernists exaggerated the severity of the sangha's problems for their own purposes. However, their parallel observations about the state of Chinese Buddhism did identify many issues that a broad spectrum of Buddhists leaders acknowledged as critically important. The Norwegian missionary Karl Ludvig Reichelt (1877–1952), for example, whose fair-minded attitude led Welch to refer to him as "the leading champion of Chinese Buddhism's good repute,"[94] described in 1934 the generally poor condition of institutional Buddhism, while also outlining features of developing reforms that showed the vitality of the religious community:

> Turning to Buddhism in China, as it is at the present time, the first thing to be said is that *externally,* that is in regard to temple buildings, processions, the grandeur of public festivals, etc., Buddhism is decidedly on the decline. In all the provinces many temples and monasteries have been ruined or badly damaged by the soldiers or by the young people. . . . In many places the temple fields and the other sources of revenue have been confiscated by the authorities and the funds used for educational purposes. In consequence the monks are hustled back into some of the corner buildings where it is impossible for them to conduct religious ceremonies in a decent way. In some districts the temples seemingly stand intact, but even there a marked decrease in income is noticed and the monks have to struggle hard to secure the most necessary means of living. The result is that many of the inmates are driven to the big cities, where they join the despised crowds of "business monks," who operate in rented houses in bigger or smaller teams, as exorcists or as common priests, chanting masses for departed souls or practicing all kinds of obscure divining methods.
>
> Under such circumstances much of the temple paraphernalia is missing and there are no rules or discipline. The moral standard is very low. The financial stringency in general naturally affects the whole Buddhist society also. There has been, therefore, a remarkable decrease in the number of monks during recent years. Even at the big Buddhist centers and holy mountains the financial difficulties are very great. For that reason many of the best monks have to go out with subscription lists in order to collect the most necessary funds for the repair and maintenance of the monasteries. The low ebb in spiritual and religious life at these places must be considered in the light of this general depression.
>
> This decline in connection with present-day Buddhism in China is so apparent that it does not take much ability to observe it. Consequently the judgment passed by most people is this: Buddhism is vanishing; the monks are disappearing more and more; and the temples and monasteries are on the decline.

> How important it is that [Christian] missionaries at least know the truth about these things which is, that the picture of the external decline, as given above, does not mean that Buddhism as a religion is either dying out or going back in China. To those who live in close contact with the new religious movements in modern China it is apparent that in some ways Buddhism is going forward. There are revivals and activities such as never were. Buddhism is taking a new and strong grip on circles which were not seriously interested before.[95]

Indeed, central to the agenda of the Chinese Buddhist community throughout the Republican period was organizing for self-protection and local mission. A number of the fledgling organizations were designed to honor the Dharma by upholding the ancient Vinaya regulations—that is, by clarifying and enforcing proper standards for ordination and monastic discipline. Some societies were established to improve educational opportunities for both monastic and lay followers. A few were especially interested in funding publication efforts such as new editions of the Tripiṭaka, scriptural commentaries, and periodicals such as *Fojiao congbao* (Buddhist Miscellany) and *Fojiao yuebao* (Buddhist Monthly). Other Buddhist organizations aimed to promote moral cultivation, social service, or institutional effectiveness. In the post-dynastic era, progress on all of these fronts was deemed necessary not merely for spiritual renewal but for the Sangha's survival in an increasingly secularized modern society.

The most important and broad-based of these organizational ventures was the Chinese General Buddhist Association (Zhonghua fojiao zonghui), founded in Shanghai in 1912 by the revered old Buddhist master Jichan, also known as Eight Fingers (Bazhi Toutuo) because of his devotional sacrifice of one finger from each hand. The organization was established in immediate response to the founding in Nanjing of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao hui) under the leadership of Ouyang Jingwu, the radical lay disciple of Yang Wenhui, who at the time of his teacher's death was given charge of the Jinling Scriptural Press. Numerous other societies were begun about the same time, including the Buddhist Confederation (Fojiao gonghui); the Buddhist Moral Endeavor Society (Fojiao jinde hui); the Buddhist Research Society (Foxue yanjiu she); the Young Buddhist Study Association (Fojiao qingnian xuehui); the Chinese Yellow Swastika Society (Zhonghua huangwanzi hui), which engaged in emergency relief work similar to that of the International Red Cross; the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (Fojiao xiejin hui), which Taixu founded in January 1912 at the Pilu si in Nanjing; the Buddhist Society of the Great Vow (Fojiao hongshi hui), which Taixu founded in February 1913 at Ningbo's Yanqing si; and the League for the Support of Buddhism (Weichi fojiao tongmeng hui), which Taixu announced in March 1913 from the Guanyin si in Beijing.[96]

Very few of these Buddhist organizations were functionally effective or long-lived. Initial inspiration was rarely matched by sustained commitment to action. Many were merely announced but never actually formed, while others vanished soon after they were established. As Yu-yue Tsu reported,

> As a reaction to external circumstances enthusiasm surged high at first, but there was nothing within the Order to uphold it, and so, when the first impetus had spent itself, the movement fell to pieces. One by one the activities such as educational and charitable institutions, lectures and magazines were given up, and the various societies, which had sprung up like mushrooms, disappeared as quickly.[97]

Even the Chinese General Buddhist Association of 1912, impressive because of its proposals for representational accountability, could not long maintain its initial momentum. At its first annual conference in March 1913, soon after its charter had been approved by the government, it was able to claim twenty-two provincial branches and more than four hundred local chapters, coordinated from national offices in the Jing'an si in Shanghai.[98] Yet even though the eminent Chan master Yekai (1852–1922) was elected to serve as president and a basic national structure was rapidly developed, the association failed to operate effectively within the year. Its new periodicals, which Taixu had been appointed to edit, ceased publication for lack of adequate funding.[99] Apathy within the sangha, factional distrust, organizational inexperience, and general economic difficulties were all contributing factors.

The Chinese General Buddhist Association was resuscitated briefly in 1915 to defend the community from the potentially destructive consequences of a bill entitled "Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples" (Guanli simiao tiaoli). Although adopted by the parliament, it became meaningless in the political chaos that prevailed after Yuan Shikai's failed bid to become emperor in the spring of 1916 and his sudden death in June of that year. A more formal effort in 1917 to resurrect the association with an amended charter was terminated in 1919, when questions about the legality of the organization led the Ministry of the Interior to order its dissolution. Several other attempts failed at creating a lasting representative structure prior to the modest success of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao hui), which was founded in Shanghai in April 1929 and reorganized after World War II by Taixu and other prominent monks.

At the same time that the monastic community struggled to organize institutionally, it sought to address pressing economic problems, support lay Buddhist activity, improve monastic education, and monitor political events while cultivating sympathetic officials within the government. The sangha had always served as a "field of merit" for the Buddhist laity, who had historically given generously to those Chinese monastic institutions that exemplified selflessness and proper discipline. Most large public Buddhist monasteries, therefore, owned a considerable amount of property. The rent income from donated farmlands provided the principal funding with which the monasteries were operated. A second important source of capital for many of the large monasteries—and the primary source for most of the small hereditary temples—was the income from fees collected for ceremonies for the dead.

Direct monetary donations from lay patrons was a third source,[100] although a distressed national economy that was severely disrupted by civil strife and warfare throughout the Republican years, Guomingdang land reform policies that restricted the rights of landowners, the anti-superstition attack on Buddhist funerary rites, and the harsh anti-bourgeois rhetoric of the progressively influential Communist movement all curtailed the monasteries' ability to collect rent and to receive other donations. Few monasteries were substantially enough

endowed with land and other resources not to be constantly dependent on lay patronage. Therefore, to ensure financial stability, monastic leaders found it increasingly important to foster closer ties with the lay societies.

The fact was that committed lay Buddhists in China—namely, those who had formally taken refuge in the Three Jewels of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha *(guiyi sanbao)*—made up only perhaps 1 percent of the country's population. Given the traditionally syncretic patterns of Chinese religious practice, a great number of people occasionally worshipped at Buddhist temples, employed the services of monks at family funerals, and even read Buddhist literature without ever seriously considering taking the five vows *(wu jie)* required to become a lay disciple.[101] Religious harmony remained highly valued and religious eclecticism quite common, as illustrated by the success in the Republican period of sects like the United Goodness Society (Tongshan she), the Apprehension of Goodness Society (Wushan she), the Court of the Dao (Dao yuan), the Six Sages True Dao Union Society (Liu shen zhen Dao tongyi hui), the Study of Morality Society (Daode xue she), the Temple of Five Religions (Wujiao Dao yuan), the Way of Unity (Yiguan Dao), and others. Such religious groups flourished in the period by offering syntheses of Chinese popular religion, Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Christianity, and other forms of spirituality.[102] Nevertheless, the Buddhist revival movement did succeed in leading many people to develop, far more intentionally than before, their own religious identities *as Buddhists.*

This development was in part the result of a genuine spiritual renewal movement within the Buddhist community and in part a response to strident expressions of Christian theological exclusivism, which heightened a sense of interreligious competition. Many Chinese were, in fact, experiencing new religious insecurities in light of Christian preaching that explicitly or implicitly devalued their own traditional patterns of spirituality as excessively syncretistic and otherworldly. Thus it was in response to both internal enthusiasms and external critiques that lay Buddhist societies sought to redouble their own social service efforts in the areas of public health, welfare, and dis-

aster relief work, as well as to deepen religious commitment through scriptural study and devotional practice.

Several lay associations even provided residential facilities for members who wished to engage in reading and contemplation in a tranquil setting. Laypeople who practiced vegetarianism and celibacy were at times permitted to reside in monasteries for periods of study and meditation with the monks. Likewise, monks benefited from programs specifically designed for educated lay Buddhists, as they did by enrolling in classes at Ouyang Jingwu's Chinese Metaphysical Institute (Zhina neixue yuan) in Nanjing, which emphasized Weishi philosophy. Established in 1919, the Institute operated continuously until the Japanese invasion of Nanjing in 1937, offering learning opportunities that served to underscore some of the inadequacies in both lay and monastic education.

A few ambitious masters within the Chinese sangha were committed to experimental projects for improving monastic education. Perhaps 70 or 80 percent of monks were literate, compared to the 1926 estimate of a 20 percent literacy rate among the general population. However, their educational opportunities were limited largely to a small number of traditional texts and practical manuals.[103] After renouncing the lay life in a hereditary temple, a monk's basic training in monastic life was customarily provided by his tonsure master and tonsure family. This education might extend over several years before a monk was encouraged to seek ordination *(shou jie)*. Although after 1911 ordination was no longer controlled by the government through a limited number of monasteries authorized for such actions, ordinands generally continued in the Republican period to travel to the large public monasteries that provided "Vinaya schools" or structured programs of monastic discipline. Education for monks in such centers focused on the practice of the 250 vows of the Prātimokṣa *(sifen jieben)* and concluded ceremonially with the "bhikṣu vows" *(biqiu jie)*, the 58 "bodhisattva vows" *(pusa jie)*, and the burning of "incense scars" *(xiang ba)* in the monk's scalp with moxa *(shao ba)*.

According to the monk Zhenhua (b. 1922), completing the standard educational program was a difficult endeavor, particularly so in the largest and most famous ordination center in central China, Baohua Shan, east of Nanjing. Recalling the intensity and severity of the monastery's Vinaya school, Zhenhua wrote:

> From the time classes were opened at the beginning of the session to the burning of ordination scars at the end, we lived a life of "trembling dread, like skirting an abyss or treading on thin ice." From the beginning to the end, the features of the ordination masters were hardened into forbidding masks. For the entire fifty-three day session, I never once saw them give a kind look or say a civil word to an ordinee. Never once did I see an encouraging smile. . . . The ordination instructors at Baohua Mountain had excellent deportment and were dedicated to teaching monastic rules, but they were overly severe. In fact, they were severe to the point of cruelty. This made the ordinees feel more resentment than respect, more enmity than gratitude.[104]

Ordained monks who were interested in expanding their understanding of doctrine or ritual techniques would subsequently travel around to different monasteries to find sound teachers. Most often they would travel on foot, finding shelter when they could in the public monasteries that were obligated to grant them hospitality, however meager. Some of the most serious and zealous monks would eventually seek to become disciples of a particular Dharma master *(fashi)* recognized for knowledge of a particular text or tradition. Well-known teachers, such as the eminent Chan master Xuyun (1840–1959) or the venerable Tiantai master Dixian, had large numbers of monastic students and lay followers. The anti-sectarian spirit within the Buddhist community at the time made it easy for monks to belong to one particular lineage but also to broaden their knowledge beyond it. One could be tonsured by a Chan master of the Linji lineage, yet also extensively study Tiantai, Huayan, or Tantric texts and engage in Pure Land practice. As the memoir of the monk Zhenhua suggests, regionalism, factionalism, and personalism often limited one's access to learning and spiritual advancement, but many dedicated monks persevered.

Distinctively new in the Republican period were monastic schools that attempted to reform pedagogical methods and to expand the scope of education beyond traditional Buddhist studies. In many

schools, modern instructional methods such as the use of the blackboard and the graded evaluation of demonstrated learning were gradually introduced. In some monastic schools, lay teachers were even employed. Among the most notable institutions were Huayan University (Huayan daxue), founded in Shanghai in 1912 by Yuexia; the Academy for Spreading the Dharma (Hongfa xueyuan), founded at the Guanzong si in Ningbo in 1918 by Dixian; the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (Wuchang foxue yuan), founded in that city in 1922 by Taixu; the South Fujian Seminary (Minnan foxue yuan), founded in Xiamen (Amoy) in 1925 by Taixu; and the Tianning Buddhist Institute (Tianning foxue yuan), founded in 1931 in Zhangzhou and led by Deyi, Minzhi, and others who favored educational modernization.[105]

Most of the new monastic schools, however, were poorly funded and short-lived. Altogether, they attracted probably no more than 1 or 2 percent of the Republican sangha. Most monks seemed to think that the traditional educational system was more than sufficient for their needs. In Dongchu's judgment, the new efforts at monastic education in the Republican period were a failure for three basic reasons: first, because sangha leaders did not sufficiently manifest the required spirit of self-sacrifice and persistence in the face of difficulties; second, because the schools were usually not organized according to sound educational principles; and, third, because students were sometimes permitted to concentrate on peripheral secular subjects and to neglect the fundamental moral disciplines emphasized in traditional monastic training. This third element, he concluded, led not a few young Buddhist monks of talent and promise to become so secularized in outlook that they ultimately abandoned their religious practice. Perhaps not wishing to appear overly critical in this respect of Taixu and the monastic schools established under his leadership, Dongchu tempered his remarks by acknowledging that the reformer did consistently offer appropriate and compassionate counsel to young monks who chose to return to lay life. According to Dongchu, Taixu advised them to remain active laypersons within the Buddhist community rather than become completely secularized citizens without commitments to the Dharma.[106]

Besides seeking ways to achieve financial stability and improve monastic education, the Chinese sangha was concerned during the Republican period with forecasting the political weather in order to detect potentially destructive storms brewing on the horizon. The historic principles that discouraged monks from direct involvement in political matters did not deter monastic leaders from pursuing relationships with, and currying favors from, national and local officials in the hope of preventing new attempts to confiscate Buddhist property or intervene in sangha affairs. The 1898 and 1904 Qing appropriations of Buddhist monasteries and farmlands for the support of educational reforms, both of which had been rescinded after Buddhist protests, had not been forgotten. In those cases, prominent monks had appealed to the throne for a reconsideration of the policies, asserting in part that the sangha was also promoting modern educational reform.

After the 1904 action, some monasteries had also tried to protect themselves through temporary affiliations with the Japanese Buddhist Higashi-Honganji sect, which was engaged in missionary work in China.[107] This more radical strategy of seeking shelter under a Japanese institutional umbrella, first proposed by two Japanese priests, Mizuno Baigyō and Itō Kendō, apparently caused some consternation at the Qing court. Imperial concerns that such protective relationships with Japanese institutions might begin to increase may actually have contributed to a 1905 edict that provided the Buddhist community with temporary relief from extensive governmental confiscations.

During the Republican years, most Guomindang leaders concluded that the Buddhist community constituted no significant political threat. Therefore, although the sangha was closely supervised, it was allowed to function with relative freedom. Nevertheless, under the provisions of the Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples, promulgated in 1915 during Yuan Shikai's presidency, all monks and nuns, monasteries and temples were to be registered with the government. In addition, Buddhist properties could not be alienated without state approval, and religious activities and public preaching were to be monitored and regulated.[108] An organized Buddhist protest and lobbying effort against the legislation soon led to Yuan's

retaliatory order to close the Chinese General Buddhist Association. Although the regulatory law of 1915 was never enforced, most of its provisions were revived in December 1929 with the adoption of "Regulations for the Supervision of Monasteries and Temples" (Jiandu simiao tiaoli). While the 1929 law did recognize the representative authority of the Chinese Buddhist Association that had been founded in Shanghai that year, the organization was placed under the direct control of the Ministry of the Interior to ensure its patriotic allegiance to the state.

Throughout the Republican era, Buddhist properties were the target of military or local government confiscations. Condemning such actions, Buddhists remained especially indignant that the large and historic Longhua si in Shanghai, visited by Dharmapala in 1893, was occupied by one military force after another from 1911 on.[109] The editors of *The Young East* reported in September 1928 that Japanese Buddhists were again offering to help by lodging an official protest because the Christian General Feng Yuxiang (1882–1948) and other leaders of the Nanjing government had "shown a disposition to confiscate all landed properties belonging to Buddhist temples throughout China."[110] Zhenhua testified that by the time he set out from his home in Henan in 1945 in search of spiritual instruction in the south, "Buddhism in Henan had been crushed by the 'Christian General' Feng Yuxiang, and . . . ninety percent of the province's pristine, solemn places of truth had already become vacant and dilapidated temples. . . . The better temples were changed into schools and army camps, their scriptures and images vandalized with impunity and the temple lands divided and taken."[111] Such appropriations and property damages increased notably after 1937, when the war of resistance against the Japanese began. In fact, sangha leaders found it increasingly difficult to cultivate effective friends in high places. Guomindang officials were far more concerned with achieving critical military and political goals than with not offending Buddhists.

Moreover, an increasing number of government officials were either influenced by anti-superstition campaigns and antagonistic toward all religious faiths or were Christian converts with strong anti-Buddhist prejudices. According to Kenneth Scott Latourette, vigorous Christian missionary efforts in the early Republican years had established a growing community of about 3.5 million church members by 1927—three times the number in 1900.[112] Although this still represented an extremely small percentage of the total population of China, Christians were often educated people who held important positions of leadership in education, commerce, and government. Sun Yat-sen was a professing Christian who had once been banished from his home village as a youth for breaking a finger off an image of a deity associated with Chinese popular religion. Chiang Kai-shek was baptized a Christian in Shanghai in 1930, after his marriage to a Chinese convert, Soong Meiling (b. 1897), a member of a prominent Chinese family.[113]

Buddhist leaders were accustomed to encountering Christians in large coastal cities with sizable foreign communities, such as Shanghai, and even in small, isolated mission stations in the interior. They were aware of "the Mountain of the Logos Spirit" (Dao Feng Shan), the special mission station devoted to Christian-Buddhist encounter that Karl Reichelt founded at Shatin, near Hong Kong, in 1927.[114] Yet they were not accustomed to confronting unsympathetic Christians holding important positions in public institutions and government offices. Most leaders of the sangha began to realize that both secular humanism and Christianity would present Buddhism with ever more serious challenges in the years ahead.

A VOICE OF REFORM

It was in the context of these many efforts to reinvigorate the Buddhist community and to defend the Dharma in an era of social change and civil strife that Taixu, a young Buddhist monk from Zhejiang, rose to prominence as a religious reformer. Sometimes expansively referred to as "the Saint Paul of Chinese Buddhism"[115] and "the Buddhist Pope of China,"[116] he was a person of considerable energy, intelligence, and charisma. Taixu believed that, given a constantly changing world, Chinese Buddhism must change, too; were it to cling rigidly to a form shaped by past realities and experiences, he observed, it

would wither and vanish. For Chinese Buddhism to achieve its historic mission, its monastic and lay communities needed to reorganize and reorient themselves for the radical demands of the bodhisattva path in the modern world. As an ethical pietist, Taixu called for an engagement with, rather than a withdrawal from, the issues of the socio-political world. Emphasizing the moral demands of bodhisattvahood, he called for compassionate social service both as a necessary result of and as a means to an experience of complete enlightenment.

It may be argued that Taixu manifested what has been termed a "utopian propensity."[117] That is, he hoped through his teachings to encourage within the Buddhist community a new measure of religious imagination, to provoke an exploration of things that had never been but that could be. Indeed, he was often so intently focused on shaping Buddhism's future that he appeared to be insensitive to and dismissive of its present and its past. Like all utopian thinkers, Taixu repudiated much of his tradition's contemporary expression in his desire to outline a more ideal, perfect future way. He was confident that his modernist Buddhist perspectives were in harmony with processes of religious evolution that would ultimately lead all sentient beings to Buddhism and beyond, and that would one day make of this very world a pure land.

Despite the many disciples who followed and revered him, the reformer's views were not widely accepted within the sangha. Taixu had many ardent detractors. According to Weihuan, most established masters would not let their students go to Taixu's Wuchang Buddhist Institute for fear that they would become "new monks" and return to "revolutionize their old life."[118] It has been said that "utopians are almost always tragic or tragicomic figures who die unfulfilled."[119] This was indeed Taixu's ultimate fate. He died thinking that he had been a failure. What he tried to accomplish, how he hoped to defend and advance the Dharma, where he thought the future was leading, and why he thought himself a failure are the subjects of the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 2

THE SOUND OF THE TIDE FOR A NEW CHINA

To understand the mental universe of many religious leaders, it is important to know something about the fabric of their lives. In such cases, interpretation requires a sense not only of the person's historical context but of how he or she experienced and engaged it. Thus biographical accounts and autobiographical reflections are crucial to appreciating the diverse forms of piety represented by spiritual guides such as Augustine (396–430), Nichiren (1222–1282), Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948), Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), and the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989). The modern Buddhist reformer Taixu was also such a figure.

The Chinese monk lived and taught in a time of revolution and renaissance, a complex and turbulent period of change for China and the entire world. During Taixu's lifetime, the Chinese people experienced the end of dynastic rule and the beginning of a republican experiment. They entertained grand dreams for the country's future and suffered the grim nightmares of social, political, and economic upheaval. They engaged in bitter civil strife and were enveloped in a devastating global war. Taixu sought to serve as a transformative agent within that context. He heard "the sound of the sea tide" (i.e., the Buddha's voice) calling for a new Buddhism for a new China. He

firmly believed that the propagation of that modern form of Buddhism held the keys not only to the salvation of his country but to the emergence of a just and peaceful global civilization. Accordingly, he commended to the Mahāyāna community an ethical form of piety that centered bodhisattva practice not on exercises of religious philosophy, sitting meditation, or ritual observance but on expressions of enlightened social responsibility within the world. Highlighting the reformer's religio-historical context, Frank Millican once commented:

> To understand Taixu we need to see him as a lad among a group of droning priests at Tiantong Monastery, situated in the seclusion of the beautiful hills of Zhejiang, near Ningbo city. Here he lived under the shadow of the images of Buddha and the many Buddhist worthies and learned to chant his prayers, make his prostrations, and share in the daily routine of a typical monastery. There must have been in his veins some blood different from that of his fellow priests, or, to speak in the language of the school of thought in which he was trained, the person of a previous existence whose "karma" was reborn in him must have lived a life which merited much, that he alone of hundreds should have risen above the humdrum existence of his fellow priests and have emerged as interpreter of Buddhism to this age.[1]

There were, of course, many other influential and competent voices within the Chinese sangha interpreting the Dharma in relation to the challenges of the modern world. Yet because of the force of Taixu's charismatic personality, the breadth of his academic interests, the timeliness of his ecumenical concerns, and the scope of his vision for a reenergized and missionary form of Buddhism, he left a lasting impression on many both within and outside of his own religious community. Just as the firebrands of the late Qing and early Republican years called for a thoroughgoing political revolution and the creation of a "new people" *(xin min)*, so in a parallel manner did Taixu call for a "Buddhist revolution" *(fojiao geming)* and the creation of "new monks" *(xin seng)*. To achieve this end, he proposed a reorganization of the sangha through broad structural, educational, and economic reforms, called for closer ties between the monastic and lay communities, and proposed new measures of cooperation in global

mission. Sometimes his ideas were rejected; sometimes what was rejected was Taixu the man. His critics perceived not only errors in judgment but personality flaws; his disciples rarely acknowledged either.

Taixu's story, therefore, consists of both ideas and events, concepts and confrontations, opinions and opponents. Despite the fact that Taixu was never recognized as a brilliantly original Mahāyāna theoretician, the contours of his map of the bodhisattva path in and through the modern world continue to inform the practice of many Buddhists in East Asia and around the world. Taixu is remembered most for his unique embodiment of one compelling perspective on what it might mean to be a Chinese patriot, a Buddhist devotee, and a global citizen.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND EARLY EDUCATION

Taixu (original school name: Lu Peilin) was born in the village of Chang'an in the Haining county of northern Zhejiang province on January 8, 1890, in the fifteenth year of the Qing emperor Guangxu's reign. His father was a bricklayer who died when his son was only a year old. Two years later, when his mother remarried into the Li family, he became the responsibility of his maternal grandmother. A devout woman who was well versed in poetry and literature, she cared for the young boy and introduced him to Buddhism through frequent visits to nearby temples. Although Taixu suffered from remittent fevers and was frequently ill, his maternal uncle, a local schoolteacher, made certain that he received a sound primary education in the Chinese classics.

When Taixu was eight, his grandmother began to take him on pilgrimages to some of the more famous Buddhist centers in the sacred mountains of east-central China. He was fascinated with the rituals performed by the monks of Anhui's Jiuhua Shan and the large and impressive Jin Shan monastery near Zhenjiang in Jiangsu prov-



VENERABLE MASTER TAIXU

Source: Yinshun Cultural and Educational Foundation (Yinshun wenjiao jijin hui), Xinzhu County, Taiwan.

ince. Eventually he also accompanied his grandmother to the famous Buddhist center on Putuo Shan on the coast of Zhejiang, as well as to the Yuwang (Asoka) and Tiantong monasteries near Ningbo. These religious pilgrimages were formative journeys during which Taixu began to develop an interest not only in Buddhism but in the ideals and daily rhythms of the monastic life.

In 1901, Taixu accepted a business apprenticeship in Chang'an, but this was soon interrupted by the unexpected death of his mother and further health problems of his own. Although in time he returned to his duties as a shop clerk, recurring illnesses presented considerable difficulties for both his professional responsibilities and personal study. According to Yinshun, in 1903, for the very first time, Taixu "began to long for the carefree life of the Buddha's way."[2]

Just a year later, in the spring of 1904, as the impoverished Qing government was authorizing the confiscation of monastic property to support new educational ventures, Taixu was actively contemplating joining the sangha. At the age of fourteen, influenced by his grandmother's piety, grieved by the death of his parents, and anxious about his physical health and stamina, he decided to renounce lay life. His original plan was to travel by river boat to Putuo Shan via Shanghai. However, when he realized that he had mistakenly boarded a boat heading to Suzhou, he got off at Pingwang and walked to the nearby Xiao Jiuhua si, which he and his grandmother had visited briefly when on a pilgrimage to temples near the city of Zhenjiang, at the intersection of the Grand Canal and Yangzi River.[3]

Judging his karma to be in harmony with his ultimate aim, Taixu presented himself to Master Shida, the prior of the monastery *(jian yuan)*, and explained his intent. The prior received him, but because the Xiao Jiuhua si was a public monastery *(shifang conglin)* that was not permitted to tonsure and train novices, he soon arranged to conduct the young man's tonsure ceremony at a small hereditary temple in Suzhou. There Shida gave him the Dharma name Weixin (Mind Only). Remembering the occasion at a later date, Taixu confessed, "I renounced the lay life, longing for the supernatural powers of the immortals *(xian)* and Buddhas *(fo)*." In fact, he noted, "still not dis-

tinguishing between the immortals and the Buddhas, but thinking of attaining their supernatural powers, I entered the sangha."[4]

Several months later, Shida escorted the novice to meet the Buddhist Master Zhuangnian, who was the head monk of the Yuhuang temple near Ningbo. It was Master Zhuangnian who gave the young monk the style or courtesy name Taixu (Supreme Emptiness) to forever remind him that he "existed in the midst of supreme emptiness."[5] The elderly master also provided the herbal medicines that finally helped cure the novice of his persistent fevers. In the late fall of 1904, Zhuangnian accompanied Taixu to the Tiantong si at Ningbo, where he officially took the Buddhist precepts and was ordained under the revered old Chinese master and poet Jichan, also widely known as Eight Fingers (Bazhi Toutuo).[6]

In light of Taixu's intellectual promise, Eight Fingers soon recommended that he begin studies with the respected Buddhist master Qichang, abbot of Ningbo's nearby Yongfeng si. Master Qichang undertook to instruct Taixu in meditational disciplines using the *hua tou* ("critical phrase") method of Chan, posing enigmatic questions for contemplation.[7] He also guided the young monk's introduction to Buddhist history and literature. In his studies of famous Buddhist texts such as the *Zhiyue lu* (Record of Pointing at the Moon) and *Gaoseng zhuan* (Record of the Lives of Eminent Monks), Taixu proved himself an earnest and able pupil.

In his early studies of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, Taixu was especially attracted to the *Lengyan jing* (Śūraṅgama Sūtra) and *Fahua jing* (Lotus Sūtra), the study of which helped him recognize the fundamental differences between Buddhist and Daoist teachings. It was during this initial period of Buddhist training that Taixu first met Yuanying (1878–1953), a disciple of Eight Fingers who came to visit Master Qichang in the summer of 1906.[8] Twelve years Taixu's senior, Yuanying would become an important leader within the sangha and serve as the first president of the Chinese Buddhist Association of 1929. Acknowledging their common interests, Taixu and Yuanying established a friendship and pledged to work with each other for a revitalized religious tradition in China. Because of differences of opinion

and personal style, it would turn out to be a difficult relationship to maintain. Many years later, in fact, Taixu wrote in his autobiography, "Although afterwards he and I were constantly engaged in conflict, when I think back on those days of scriptural studies, . . . I shall always remember his friendship."[9]

Taixu benefited not only from Qichang's instruction but also from private interviews with Eight Fingers at the Tiantong si nearby, as well as from opportunities to meet other respected Chinese Buddhist masters who visited the Ningbo area monasteries, including the Venerable Daojie (1866–1932), another of Eight Fingers' disciples.[10] Yet in the fall of 1907, inspired by lectures on the scriptures given by Daojie and strongly encouraged by Yuanying, the young monk bid farewell to Qichang and departed for Cixi to pursue more advanced studies at the Xifang si, which maintained one of the larger Buddhist libraries in Jiangsu. It was there, while concentrating on the Prajñāpāramitā (Perfection of Wisdom) literature, that Taixu had a powerful religious experience that was to prove a milestone in his spiritual progress. For Taixu, this represented the arising of the thought of enlightenment *(bodhicitta)* and was the real beginning of his bodhisattva career. He testified that it enabled him to slough off the "pollution of the world" and gave him "new life."[11] He later recalled, "After some time, knowledge of the Buddha came to me like a pearl, lost and found again, and as with a mirror, I was enabled to see clearly through the changes of this life and the world."[12]

In the spring of 1908, when Taixu was eighteen years old, the reformist monk Huashan came to the Xifang si, where Taixu was staying. According to Yinshun, Huashan was actually "the first person to start modernizing the sangha."[13] Impressed with Taixu, Huashan told him about those working for revolutionary political and social changes within China, asserting that the monastic order itself must modernize and promote educational reform. Initially, Taixu was uncertain about Huashan's ideas; indeed, the two monks argued for more than ten days about what such modernization efforts would require. Challenging Taixu to broaden his reading, Huashan gave him a wide variety of provocative books with which he was unfamiliar, including

Kang Youwei's utopian classic *Datong shu* (The Book of the Great Community), Liang Qichao's *Xinmin shuo* (On New People), Zhang Taiyan's (1868–1936) *Gao fozi shu* (Letter to Followers of the Buddha) and *Gao baiyi shu* (Letter to Lay Buddhists), Yan Fu's *Tianyan lun* (On Evolution), and Tan Sitong's *Renxue* (An Exposition on Benevolence).

Deeply influenced by these writings, Taixu soon aligned himself with Huashan's modernist stance. Committed to both political reform for the nation and religious reform for the Buddhist community, he formalized a special alliance of friendship with Huashan and began to consider how in practical terms a "new Buddhism" could be created in China to parallel the creation of a new nation. Writes Yinshun, "Because of Taixu's great resolve to save the world through Buddhism, he moved forward from that point and could never again restrain himself. Turning from the kind of religious path that seeks to transcend the human realm in order to enter the Absolute, rather he chose to distance himself from the Absolute in order to confront the world of humankind."[14] The vow to pursue this kind of path to transform the world, Taixu stated, was a direct result of his close relationship with Huashan.[15]

Soon thereafter, at the Xiao Jiuhua si near Pingwang, Taixu met Qiyun, the revolutionary monk from Hunan. Qiyun was a former student of Eight Fingers who, during studies in Japan, had become an early member of the Tongmeng hui (Chinese United League) founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1905. An iconoclastic spirit, Qiyun was associated with Xu Xilin (1873–1907), Qiu Jin (1879?–1907), and other revolutionaries intent on the overthrow of the Qing government.[16] Yinshun notes that, according to the demands of each particular situation, Qiyun wore either western clothes with leather shoes or Buddhist monastic garb. When Taixu first encountered him, he was wearing the monastic robes that permitted him to hide from government officials in the monastery. It was through Qiyun's influence that Taixu was first encouraged to read political materials such as Sun Yat-sen and Zhang Taiyan's *Minbao* (People's Journal), Liang Qichao's *Xinmin congbao* (New People's Review), and Zou Rong's (1885–1905)

Geming jun (Revolutionary Army). Influenced deeply by Sun's three principles of the people *(sanmin zhuyi)*, he became filled with optimism about revolutionary proposals for broad Chinese political and social reforms. Comments Yinshun, "This was the beginning of Taixu's associations with political partisans *(dangren)*."[17]

In the fall of 1908, Taixu went to Ningbo to work with Eight Fingers. The elderly master was serving as director of the Ningbo Sangha Educational Association (Ningbo seng jiaoyu hui), which he had founded earlier that year. When Taixu learned that Qiyun had been arrested on suspicion of involvement in subversive activities, he immediately sought Eight Fingers' help in pleading for Qiyun's release. After the monk was freed from prison, Taixu, Yuanying, and Qiyun assisted Eight Fingers with the promotion of his newly established educational association. The association in Ningbo was only one of a number of ideas for expanding monastic education that had been developed since the Qing government had suspended the imperial examination system in September 1905. That governmental decision had resulted in renewed efforts to confiscate Buddhist property by many local officials throughout China, because each locality faced the daunting expense of creating new educational institutions at which students could become qualified for official service. Buddhist leaders intended to counter such confiscations of property in part by highlighting their own attempts to improve education within the sangha.

Taixu's introduction to such efforts through the Ningbo Sangha Educational Association gave him a glimpse of the promise of educational reforms not only for enhancing the public image of the sangha but for advancing broad reforms of Buddhist thought and practice. Moreover, the organization gave Taixu some of his first opportunities to lecture on contemporary trends within Chinese society and religion, as well as to test the support for his views among the established leaders of the sangha. Thus, observed one commentator, by design and good fortune, Taixu had by his eighteenth birthday already made the acquaintance of "the most celebrated Buddhists in China and obtained a profound view of Buddhism."[18]

In the spring of 1909, Yuanying and Zhuangnian recommended that Taixu go to Jin Shan to practice meditation. Nevertheless, Taixu later confessed, "By that time my thoughts were already directed toward modern studies."[19] Thus he traveled instead to Nanjing, with the encouragement of Huashan and Qiyun, to begin studies at the Jetavana Hermitage (Zhihuan jingshe) operated by Yang Wenhui, later often called "the father of the Buddhist revival."[20] As noted in Chapter 1, Yang was a well-educated Buddhist layman who had devoted himself to publishing and distributing Buddhist literature through his Jinling Scriptural Press. In addition, as an aspect of his special alliance with the Ceylonese lay devotee Anagarika Dharmapala, he had founded a new kind of school on his estate for all those interested in Buddhism's global mission. Yang himself lectured on the Buddhist scriptures, especially on the *Śūraṅgama Sūtra,* which he judged to be especially compatible with modern science.

Otto Franke reported that the bylaws for the school were carefully articulated in thirty-five articles.[21] The school was designed to have three levels of education, with a total curriculum of eight years of academic work. At each level, there were requirements in Buddhist textual studies, modern Chinese literature, and English language and literature, with a minimum of forty-two hours of class time each week. The bylaws called for a limitation of enrollment to twenty-four students, monks, and laymen. All those selected for admission were to have as their ultimate goal the propagation of Buddhism throughout the world. Although Yang's innovative school was forced to close for financial reasons at the end of the academic year, Taixu's brief experience at the Jetavana Hermitage further fueled his optimism about possibilities for real social, political, and religious reformation in China.

By this time, Yuanying had become head monk of the Jiedai si at Ningbo, while Daojie had assumed similar responsibilities at the Fayuan si in Beijing. On Huashan's recommendation, Taixu served for a semester on the faculty of the Huayu Primary School at Putuo Shan. Staying at the famous monastery gave him an opportunity to meet many leaders within the sangha whom he did not know, including the Pure Land master Yinguang, whose conservatism would always set the two at odds.[22] Although Taixu returned to the Xifang si in Cixi to continue his studies of the Tripiṭaka, only a month later, early in 1910, he accepted Qiyun's invitation to help him organize in Guangzhou an Association for the Education of Monks (Seng jiaoyu hui), as encouraged by his friend Yuebin, the head monk of the Shuangxi si, which was located on White Cloud Mountain (Baiyun Shan) outside the city. At the time, Guangzhou was a major center for anti-Qing revolutionary activity. In fact, during the period when Taixu was in Guangzhou, radicals staged an unsuccessful uprising in the city, while in Beijing others plotted the assassination of the prince regent.

In the summer of 1910, Taixu, Qiyun, and Yuebin were all invited to lecture at the Hualin si in Guangzhou. While there, Taixu visited the Shizi lin (Lion's Grove), where he helped organize a new center for Buddhist studies *(fojiao jingshe)*. Because several of his lectures at the Shizi lin were eventually edited and published, Yinshun claims that "this was the beginning of Taixu's scholarly writing."[23] Indeed, it was Taixu's first opportunity to publish some of his ideas about the path of a modern-day bodhisattva and the necessity for a comprehensive reformation within the sangha. For example, stressing the need for developing an attitude that is open to religious change, he wrote in "Jiao guan zhuyao" (An Introduction to Buddhist Teaching and Meditation), "The good student of Buddhism relies on his heart and mind, not on ancient tradition, relies on the essential meaning of words, not on the words themselves. The good student is constantly adapting to circumstances and cleverly provoking people to think."[24] And in "Fojiao shi lue" (An Outline of Buddhist History), Taixu asserted that Buddhism's failure to remain a vital force in modern China was due to the otherworldliness of the sangha and the tendency of Buddhists to hold onto the externals of their religion without understanding its essence. Claimed Taixu, "China has entered the era of a world community. Government, religion, and science have all changed. Therefore Buddhism must change or it will definitely not survive!"[25]

CONFLICTS AND COMMITMENTS

Although Taixu was only in his early twenties, he was already beginning to be recognized within the Chinese Buddhist community for his personal charisma and modernist positions. Indeed, because he was respected by many prominent government officials and gentry in Guangdong and Jiangxi provinces, Taixu was selected in the fall of 1910 to undertake for the first time in his career the heavy responsibilities of a head monk *(zhuchi)*. When his colleague Yuebin resigned as head monk of the Shuangxi si near Guangzhou, Taixu was called to the position. Within a year, in which he was constantly lecturing both in the monastery and in the city of Guangzhou, Taixu prompted the transformation of the monastery into a "Great Lecture Center" (Mohe jiangyuan). His educational goal was to emphasize the equality of all Buddhist schools and yet the special characteristics of each.[26]

In the months preceding the successful revolt at Wuchang in October 1911, which led to the downfall of the Qing dynasty, Taixu cultivated his many close relationships with known socialists and revolutionaries in Guangdong. Among his friends were political radicals such as Pan Dawei, Liang Shangtong, and Mo Jipeng, the latter "a well known anarchist of this period who was associated with the 'assassination teams' that specialized in killing government officials in South China."[27] Together they read the controversial works of Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), and Karl Marx (1818–1883). In discussing China's political future, they debated a broad spectrum of views proposed by advocates of anarchism, socialism, democracy, and constitutional monarchy. Although there is no evidence of Taixu's participation in any overtly subversive activity, it was said that he met almost daily in secret with radicals plotting revolution. Their common anxiety about being discovered was justified when Qiyun was arrested again in April 1911. Soldiers were soon dispatched to the Shuangxi si to arrest Taixu as well. According to Yinshun, when Qiyun was taken into custody, a eulogy that Taixu had written in memory of the revolutionary martyrs who had died in the unsuccessful 1910 Guangzhou uprising was discovered among Qiyun's papers. Taixu was able to escape by hiding at the newspaper offices of his associate Pan Dawei. Because of these difficult circumstances, he decided to return to Zhejiang as soon as possible.

Accordingly, Taixu resigned as head monk of Shuangxi si that summer, then traveled to Ningbo to consult with Zhuangnian and Eight Fingers before going on to Putuo Shan for the remainder of the season. In the early autumn, he responded to Eight Fingers' urgent request to return to the Tiantong si at Ningbo. At the time, new attempts to confiscate Buddhist property by force had led Buddhist leaders in Shanghai to ask the elderly master to carry a petition to Beijing in protest. Taixu helped write the petition beseeching the Qing government to help protect Buddhist institutions. He even planned to accompany Eight Fingers to the capital to present the plan, hoping to have an opportunity to explain his own ideas about the revitalization and reform of Buddhism, but revolutionary activities along the rail line made the long trip to the capital too dangerous.

Taixu soon decided, however, to travel up the coast as far as Shanghai to meet with the gifted revolutionary monk Zongyang (1861–1930?), who was then at work on a major publication project designed to contribute to the education of the sangha: a newly edited edition of the entire Chinese Tripiṭaka.[28] Zongyang was a close associate and supporter of Sun Yat-sen, with whom he had become friends during an earlier period of residence in Japan. At this time he was living as a layman and using his lay name, Huang Zongyang.[29] He was settled at Hardoon Gardens (Ai li yuan), the large estate in the French Concession of Shanghai owned by his devoted and wealthy follower, Mrs. Silas Hardoon (Luo Jialing). It was there that Taixu heard the exciting news of the Wuchang revolt that precipitated the fall of the Qing dynasty. Jubilant at the reports, he considered with colleagues the future of the country and the precarious situation of Buddhism.

At the time of the 1911 revolution, Taixu noted that some monks actually organized monastic troops *(seng jun)* to support and participate in the military struggle against the Manchus.[30] According to Yinshun, in addition to the monk Quefei, who organized monastic troops

at the Yufo si in Shanghai, "Tieyan of the Kaiyuan si in Shaoxing [in Zhejiang province] used monastic assets for troop provisions, organized monastic forces, and appointed Dixian, the head monk of the Jiezhu si in Shaoxing, as commander."[31] In Wuhan, Welch reports, sangha troops were actually formed by order of revolutionary military commanders, although such quasi-military activities by Buddhist monks were, without exception, short-lived and insignificant.[32]

The Republic of China was officially founded in January 1912, when Sun Yat-sen accepted the provisional presidency in Nanjing. Taixu, who had spent the previous few months visiting monasteries in Zhejiang, also traveled to Nanjing to organize an Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (Fojiao xiejin hui). With help from associates in the Socialist Party, he obtained permission from the office of the president to initiate operations from the Pilu si. As Taixu was just beginning his organizational efforts, the radical monk Renshan (1887–1951), whom Taixu had known as a fellow student at Yang Wenhui's Jetavana Hermitage, came to Nanjing and met with him.[33] The discussions between the two monks bent on reform were significant because the immediate result would soon become widely known as "the invasion of Jin Shan" *(danao Jin Shan)*. Indeed, the dramatic events that subsequently unfolded at the famous Jin Shan monastery marked a most important chapter in Taixu's career. As he later declared, "From this incident, the reputation of my Buddhist reformation spread, and since then it has been either respected, feared, despised, or admired by the people."[34]

Renshan had come to Nanjing with the intention of petitioning the Ministry of Education to change the well-endowed Jin Shan monastery—a large and traditionally conservative monastic institution—into a modern school for monks. When he heard about Taixu's plans for an Association for the Advancement of Buddhism, Renshan told him that there were many monks and lay devotees who resided in nearby Zhenjiang, just down the Yangzi River from Nanjing, who would be interested in a modern program of Buddhist education. Thus he encouraged Taixu to travel with him to Jin Shan to open and establish such an association there. When they reached the monastery, they stayed at the Guanyin ge, a hereditary temple in the large Jin

Shan complex where Renshan had first entered the sangha. With the knowledge of Abbot Qingquan, Prior Yinping, and Guest Prefect Shuangting, Renshan and Taixu prepared to hold the opening conference of the new association in the meeting hall. They printed and sent out invitations to the monks in Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Nanjing, and as far away as Shanghai. Invitations were also sent to potential lay supporters, who were members of the army, government officials, merchants, or scholars in the Zhenjiang area.

When the conference opened, Taixu estimated that there were two to three hundred monks in attendance plus three to four hundred lay guests. Many of the latter were reportedly members of the Socialist Party in Zhenjiang. Taixu was chosen to serve as chairman, and he set forth briefly his basic principles of religious reform. As Howard Boorman summarizes,

> He [Taixu] believed that Buddhist land holdings were the common property of all followers of the religion and should be dedicated to the promotion of social welfare, particularly education. In a statement that aroused strong controversy, he advocated the adoption in religious communities of the principle that each person should be judged by his abilities and rewarded according to his work. Moreover, he argued for the redefinition of Buddhist doctrine because he believed Buddhism to be a religion for this world.[35]

Taixu also discussed the aims and purposes of the new association at Jin Shan and read its proposed bylaws. After Renshan made a supporting speech, a monk from Yangzhou named Jishan offered a sharply critical response. Angered, Renshan replied by recounting in detail the autocratic ways of Qingquan, Jishan, and other monks. Furthermore, he proposed that the entire Jin Shan monastery be turned into a modern school by using its considerable resources to cover the school's operating expenses. At this, according to Taixu, most of the guests clapped enthusiastically. However, shouting between opposing forces ensued, and the whole crowd became agitated. Renshan's proposal was ultimately accepted, and he and Taixu were elected to transform the Jin Shan monastery into the headquarters of the Association for

the Advancement of Buddhism with a modern monastic school. Taixu later acknowledged that the struggle certainly did not end there:

> That evening Renshan led more than twenty fellow students into the monastery to designate rooms for the association's offices. The next morning, when the association began to function, they went into the monastery's business office to examine its financial ledgers, and then into the meditation hall to announce the opening of the school. However, Qingquan, Yinping, Shuangting, Jishan and others had already left the monastery and were posting notices and even making appeals to government offices in order to oppose and stop the association. . . .
>
> Entrusting affairs in Zhenjiang to the care of Renshan, I went to Nanjing. . . . One night thereafter, Shuangting and others led more than ten workmen in fighting their way into the association's offices. Renshan and a number of others were wounded with knives and clubs. Afterwards, they initiated legal action, and in several months it was decided that Qingquan, Shuangting, plus five or six others be imprisoned for terms ranging from several months to several years. Because of this whole incident, the association's activities as well as the operation of the Jin Shan monastery were equally disrupted and the result was a confused situation that could not be straightened out.[36]

As Yinshun points out, Taixu maintained throughout his life that his intent at Jin Shan was only the very worthy one of providing modern educational opportunities for the monks of the Zhenjiang area. Taixu later wrote, "The association's bylaws did contain the revolutionary socialist idea of utilizing Buddhist property to operate a public Buddhist enterprise, but [what was] intended were peaceful, progressive steps."[37] He also stated, "It was with a peaceful attitude that I announced the preparation for these events."[38] Naturally, however, staunchly conservative opponents to modernization efforts within the sangha, as well as many moderates, fully sympathized with the monks of Jin Shan. While eschewing the violence, many Buddhists thought that the convicted monks had acted only to defend their monastery from an illegal takeover attempt that was substantially no different than those encouraged by hostile military and government officials.

Among traditionalists, therefore, Taixu soon came to represent the radical modernism and aggressive tactics that they feared and resisted. At the same time, he was embraced by the more progressive spirits within the Buddhist community as a promising young leader for reform.[39] Comments Welch, "Whatever the motives of its perpetrators, the 'invasion of Jin Shan' epitomizes the shock with which the Republican era burst upon the Buddhist establishment. It drastically foreshadowed the long conflict ahead between conservatives and radicals in the sangha."[40]

On April 1, 1912, less than two months after the abdication of the child Xuantong emperor later known as Puyi, Taixu responded to a call from Eight Fingers and traveled to Shanghai to participate in the establishment of the Chinese General Buddhist Association (Zhonghua fojiao zonghui). The old master had been very upset by the intemperate actions of the progressive young Buddhist leaders that had led to the serious events at Jin Shan. He was also concerned about the threateningly far-reaching charter of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo fojiao hui), founded in Nanjing some weeks earlier by several radical Buddhist laymen who had little respect for the monastic order. The most prominent among these lay leaders was the scholar Ouyang Jingwu, who had been Taixu's fellow student at Yang Wenhui's Jetavana Hermitage.[41] The charter of the Chinese Buddhist Association claimed for itself extensive and unprecedented religious authority: the right to superintend all Buddhist properties, to reorganize and promote all Buddhist financial affairs, and to arbitrate all disputes within the Buddhist community. According to the monk Weihuan, the association's charter promised the government, in return for such broad powers and organizational independence, that the association would not sanction activities beyond the religious sphere proper to Buddhism. The charter was actually submitted to and approved by Sun Yat-sen, the provisional president of the Republic, in the early months of 1912.[42]

Welch asserts that Ouyang's organization never actually represented more than the audacious plans of a small group of his close friends and colleagues.[43] Nevertheless, it did challenge Eight Fingers to seek the help of Yuanying, Dixian, Xuyun (1840–1959), Taixu, and

other monastic leaders to organize a more representative and responsible Buddhist association that was supportive of the sangha.[44] Hoping to promote reconciliation and harmonious order, Eight Fingers persuaded Taixu to cease any further promotion of his own Association for the Advancement of Buddhism in order to merge it with a new organization, the Chinese General Buddhist Association.[45] He invited monks from seventeen provinces to convene at Shanghai's Liuyun si for the inaugural meeting of a new association. The result was the first truly broad-based national Buddhist organization established in China.

The Chinese General Buddhist Association proposed to improve the quality of the sangha through the close supervision of ordination, educational standards, leadership selection, and social work activities. Some monks wanted the new association to pursue special agreements with the military to guarantee protection for Buddhist property in exchange for direct financial contributions. Taixu persuasively opposed the plan, however, arguing that "it is the government's natural responsibility to protect the sangha's property. With regard to the sangha contributing directly to the military, that is rather an obligation of all the citizenry. The sangha ought not use its contributions to obtain the government's protection, and the government should not use protection of property as a way to elicit direct financial support from the sangha."[46]

Such a potentially powerful national Buddhist organization had never existed before, requiring all Chinese monks and nuns to join and to abide by its regulations. Yet the leaders of the sangha believed that the times called for new measures. Because the proposed organization was basically the product of moderate voices within the sangha, it received wide support. Xuyun states that he accompanied Eight Fingers to Beijing to present the charter of the Chinese General Buddhist Association to representatives of Yuan Shikai's newly established government.[47] According to Yu-yue Tsu, the charter's basic provisions included the following:

1. This society is formed by the union of all Buddhist monks.
2. With branches all over the country, it exercises supervision over all the monasteries and monks.

3. All monks, formally admitted into the Order, are given certificates attesting to their membership in the society.
4. No monk is permitted to receive any pupil [candidate for the Order] unless the candidate is a bona fide applicant and of good family.
5. No monastery is permitted to alienate any of its property without authorization from the society.
6. Observance of monastic rules should be strictly enforced; for violation of the same rules, monks are to be punished.
7. Seminaries for the training of candidates for the Order are to be established, and in them Buddhist scriptures and Chinese classics are to be taught.
8. Persons under twenty years of age are not to be admitted into the Order; also those who have not had three years' theological training.
9. For monks to hire themselves out for the performance of funeral services, especially appearing in funeral processions, is considered derogatory to the dignity of the monastic order, and so the practice is to be strictly prohibited.[48]

Although Eight Fingers was rudely rebuffed by officials of the Ministry of the Interior, the charter was eventually ratified, even as Ouyang Jingwu's rival association ceased to exist. Before the charter's ratification, however, the elderly master became ill and died in Beijing's Fayuan si, on November 10, 1912, believing that he had failed in his mission.[49] Taixu was deeply grieved by the death of the teacher whom he respected so much. Moreover, without Eight Fingers' strong leadership within the sangha, the new association for which the master worked so hard during the last year of his life functioned for only two short years. Yet the continuing need to defend Buddhist property and to address the infighting between the more conservative and radical factions within the Buddhist community contributed to the creation of more than a dozen other Buddhist organizations through the 1920s. Taixu himself was soon promoting the Buddhist Society of the Great Vow (Fojiao hongshi hui) from Ningbo's Yanqing si. To facili-

tate reform, he also considered trying to organize a specifically Buddhist "Tongmeng hui" (Buddhist Chinese United League), which he named the League for the Support of Buddhism (Weichi fojiao tongmeng hui).[50]

Speaking at Eight Fingers' memorial service at Shanghai's Jing'an si in February 1913, Taixu spoke of the urgent need for three revolutions: an organizational revolution *(zuzhi geming)*, an economic revolution *(caichan geming)*, and an intellectual revolution *(xueli geming)*. In consonance with these three revolutions, Taixu argued, in the founding policy statement of the League for the Support of Buddhism, for five essential elements that he judged would be absolutely necessary for the revivification and preservation of the Buddhist faith in China: first, a religious community freely organized; second, a spirit as fearless as that of sacrificial animals; third, a desire to learn and to seek education; fourth, a plan for putting into actual practice compassionate action toward all; and fifth, a dedication marked by peace of mind and a sense of vocation.[51]

When the first national assembly of the Republic began meeting in Beijing that year, Taixu was arguing publicly that religious practice founded on such elements deserved freedom of expression. In a petition to members of the assembly, he declared boldy that, "based on the principle of religious freedom, we should recognize in practice the separate jurisdictions of government and religion."[52] At the same time, he emphasized to members of the Buddhist community that the struggle for religious freedom from government intervention was something about which they could never become complacent. Indeed, that struggle would be joined again soon because of the expansive new regulations of the Buddhist establishment approved by Yuan Shikai's government in 1915.

In early 1913, Taixu took up residence at the Qingliang si in Shanghai, where the editorial offices of the Chinese General Buddhist Association were located. There he helped with the editing responsibilities for the association's new journal, *Fojiao yuebao* (Buddhist Monthly). Along with like-minded colleagues at the Qingliang si and Jing'an si, the site in Shanghai of the official headquarters of the association, Taixu considered the possibilities for Buddhist reforms and

the divisive political debates within the fledgling Chinese republic. The summer months brought the national turmoil of what became known as "the second revolution," as a number of provinces declared independence from the Republic in the clash between parliament and the provisional president Yuan Shikai. Although the rebellion was quickly crushed by Yuan's army, attempts to check presidential powers continued well into the fall, when Yuan actually dissolved the Guomindang and assumed dictatorial authority.

New intrusions into Buddhist monasteries were reported in relation to the fighting. Taixu and his friends Zongyang, Yuexia (1857–1917), and others considered the dangers of their political radicalism in view of Yuan's reactionary style of leadership.[53] In response to the heated political debates on China's future at the time, Taixu himself asserted, "The political perspectives of anarchism and Buddhism are very close, yet beginning from the stage of democratic socialism we can make gradual progress toward anarchism."[54] In the fall of 1913, the *Fojiao yuebao* ceased publication because of lack of funds. At age twenty-four, Taixu had reached what he later considered to be a pivotal point in his life.

CONTEMPLATION IN SEALED CONFINEMENT

In the summer of 1914, Taixu elected to travel to Putuo Shan near the coast of the East China Sea, where he stayed at the Xilin temple. World War I, with its disillusionment about human capacities for progress and mutuality, had just begun in Europe. In addition, the distrust and enmity aroused by the Jin Shan incident remained acute in certain circles of the sangha. According to the monk Xuming (1919–1966), upon recognizing the failures of his own reformist endeavors within the Chinese Buddhist community and the war-torn state of his country and the world, Taixu actually began to have doubts about Buddhism's ability to be an effective and universal healing force.[55] Unwilling and unable to back away from his long-term aims, Taixu

nevertheless considered a period of strategic retreat appropriate. He was later to recall:

> The wish gradually formed within me of applying the law of Buddha for the harmonizing of the philosophies of ancient and modern times and of the east and the west, and of leading the nations of the whole world to follow the teachings of Śākyamuni. Since then, during the past decade, through circumstances favorable and unfavorable, whether traveling abroad or staying at home, whether engaged in mundane affairs or retired in lonely hermitage, this wish has not for one moment been permitted to leave my mind.
>
> Then the European War broke out. Added to the rottenness of the inward life of man, was the brutal struggle of the outward world. I was convinced of the magnitude of the human calamity, which like a wagon-load of hay on fire could not be extinguished with a cupful of water.
>
> Since it was ordained that I should wait until the ripe time to carry out my wish, I decided to make use of the waiting to exercise my religion [contemplation], and so I "shut myself" on Putuo Island for three years.[56]

In October, Taixu entered a voluntary three-year period of isolated study and meditation known as "sealed confinement" *(biguan)*. Such self-isolation was a highly respected religious practice of self-discipline for Chinese monks, during which they were released from the usual expectations associated with communal living and permitted to read and meditate on their own. Small cells or huts for monks so dedicated were often erected and provided for as an act of merit-making by lay supporters. The initiation of *biguan* was normally accompanied by elaborate rituals in which the monk's quarters were sealed with bright red banners announcing his inspirational example of commitment to the Dharma.[57] In Taixu's case, it was the Venerable Yinguang who presided over the formal ceremonies that sealed Taixu in his cloister.

The Christian missionary Karl Ludvig Reichelt, who became well acquainted with the monk, describes Taixu's surroundings at Putuo Shan in his book *The Transformed Abbot,* a biography of one of Taixu's disciples who eventually converted to Christianity:

> The idea of *biguan* is that a monk may be given opportunity to rehabilitate himself by concentrated meditation and thorough study of the Buddhist scriptures. Long meditations were not according to Taixu's mind but studies were simply life to him and he looked forward to having time for writing too. From the monastic library he had brought Buddhist writings. Paper and Chinese ink he regularly obtained through the little trap-door that opened and shut whenever food was pushed in for him. In the cell were a bed, a bench to sit on, a table with writing instruments and chopsticks, an extra table for books and a small altar in one corner with an image of Buddha. In the yard, just large enough to allow him a little exercise, were a small flower-bed and a few water jars. The water supply came through a long bamboo pipe from the mountain stream beyond. A couple of poles were set up with a string for laundry and in one corner of the yard the necessary "little room" had been erected.[58]

According to Reichelt, the silence and tranquillity of the place were accentuated by the sound of the sea tide as it rushed in and out among the sandbanks of Putuo Island. The profound influence of this setting on the development of Taixu's career, he points out, was reflected in the title of the most significant and long-lasting Buddhist periodical originating in the Republican period, namely, *Haichao yin* (The Sound of the Sea Tide), which Taixu founded in 1920.

During his three years of sealed confinement, Taixu devoted himself to an extensive reading program. In his autobiography, he claims that he kept firmly to a daily schedule that called for meditation and veneration of the buddhas *(li fo)* upon arising; the study of Buddhist literature in the morning; additional reading and writing in the afternoon, with attention not only to the Chinese classics but to modern literature as well; and, each evening, veneration and a final period of meditation before retiring.[59] Within his broad-ranging program of studies, Taixu was especially intrigued by the writings of Zhang Taiyan and the scholar-translator Yan Fu, both of whom maintained an active interest in Buddhism.[60] His reading included works in western history, philosophy, and science, although he spent most of his time studying the sacred scriptures of Buddhism, with special attention given to the *Lengyan jing* (Śūraṅgama Sūtra), *Dasheng qixin lun* (*Mahā-

yāna-śraddhotpāda Śāstra), and *Cheng weishi lun* (Vidyā-mātra-siddhi Śāstra).

During his period of confinement, Taixu wrote such diverse pieces as "Fofa daolun" (An Introduction to the Buddhist Dharma), "Jiaoyu xinjian" (New Conceptions of Education), "Zhexue zhengguan" (Proper Perspectives on Philosophy), "Lun Xunzi" (On Xunzi), "Lun Zhouyi" (On the *Book of Changes*), and "Lun Hanyu" (On Hanyu). Throughout his various works he called for a globalized form of modern education, individual freedoms in the context of a community committed to the welfare of all, and Buddhist wisdom and compassion as the basis for a new world civilization. According to Yinshun, in many of these works readers could easily see how "Taixu blended socialism *(shehui zhuyi)* with Buddhist teachings."[61]

Although in seclusion for three years, Taixu continued to monitor political developments in China and overseas. In May 1915, Yuan Shikai, hoping that affairs with foreign governments would not interfere with his bid for presidential powers that extended beyond even the extraordinary privileges granted in the revised constitution of May 1914, accepted the infamous Japanese "Twenty-one Demands." As Immanuel C.Y. Hsü notes, these called for "(1) recognition of Japan's position in Shandong; (2) special position for Japan in Manchuria and Inner Mongolia; (3) joint operation of China's iron and steel industries; (4) nonalienation of coastal areas to any third power; and (5) control by Japan of China's several important domestic administrations."[62] Additional agreements were signed with Russia and Great Britain for their special interests in Outer Mongolia and Tibet, respectively. These humiliating actions, along with Yuan's shocking announcement in December 1915 that he would assume the full powers of a monarch, led to a series of revolts throughout the country.

Taixu was also made aware while in seclusion of the adoption by the parliament in October 1915 of the Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples (Guanli simiao tiaoli) promulgated through the parliament with Yuan's full support. The regulations were not only more restrictive than those adopted by the Ministry of the Interior in 1913, but extended supervision well beyond the Qing codes. As Tsu comments, the act was particularly troublesome for Buddhism:

> While these regulations were supposed to apply to Buddhist and Daoist institutions without discrimination, it was clear that owing to the fact that Buddhist institutions far outnumber those of the Daoist faith and that Daoism has no monks anyway, the regulations would fall more heavily upon the Buddhists—in fact, that was the intention of the government. The government justified itself by arguing that temples and monasteries are public institutions and many of them are of historic and artistic importance, and so supervision was necessary to prevent their falling into private hands. The chief features of the regulations are: (1) registration of temples and monasteries, monks and nuns; (2) taxation of temple property; (3) non-alienation of temple property; (4) subjection of religious activities and preaching services to police regulation.[63]

Welch notes that the final sweeping element of the policy aimed to limit any public statements by monks and nuns "to doctrinal exegesis, moral exhortation, and 'stimulating patriotic thoughts.'"[64] The government also reasserted its right to monitor and control ordination through required certificates issued by the Ministry of the Interior. Yet it went even further, claiming the authority to dismiss abbots for infractions not only of the civil code but of monastic rules as well. Paul Callahan reports that these actions resulted in vehement opposition in China "from both Buddhists and Christians." On the sangha's reaction, he remarks:

> The Buddhist National Society [Chinese General Buddhist Association (Zhonghua fojiao zonghui) founded in Shanghai in 1912] set up a lobby, a preaching hall, near the National Assembly and worked zealously to influence the populace and delegates against the government. In retaliation, the government declared the society inimical to public safety and closed it. Though Yuan's schemes failed and the Society was reorganized after his fall, it was again closed by the government in 1917.[65]

The confrontations with the government that continued during Taixu's period of sealed confinement eventually led him to reflect

further on the Sangha's relation to the world and its inability to speak with one voice. He came to believe that these issues were not unrelated to the diversity within the Buddhist community itself. Thus he began to argue that those pursuing the bodhisattva path needed to understand deeply—and actually integrate—the different emphases and diverse forms of piety associated with what he had customarily spoken of as two basic approaches to the Dharma: the intuitive approach of Chan, which was not founded on special scriptures *(buli wenzi)*, and the teaching approach adopted by the Vinaya (Lü), Tiantai, Huayen, Yogācāra (Weishi, or Mind-Only), Pure Land (Jingtu), and Tantric (Zhenyan) schools.

Taixu came to claim that since no one school encompassed the entire canon and none was without a sound foundation in the Buddha's Dharma, practitioners would benefit from a synthetic approach to enlightenment based on a broad study of scripture and tradition. Nevertheless, Xuming observes, while the reformer began to advocate forging a new religio-philosophical synthesis and was convinced that each school's perspectives were grounded in a "pure mind" *(jing xin)*, he was always extremely appreciative of the idealistic philosophical perspectives that he discovered in the Weishi tradition. Thus, on the one hand, as Xuming asserts, it was most clearly in the terms of this tradition that Taixu "grasped the fundamental principles of Chinese Buddhism."[66] On the other hand, as Shengyan indicates, his stance was clearly that of a Chan master:

> Taixu studied Chan in his early years; and although Taixu later judged the eight schools to be of equal importance, he did state, "When one reaches understanding, one naturally comes to the Prajñā (Sanlun) School and the Chan School of Bodhidharma." . . . He emphasized the application of Yogācāra philosophy and constantly used its terminology to explain Buddhist texts. Hence, he often has been mistaken for a scholar of the Yogācāra School, when in fact he only borrowed its terminology as a matter of expediency.[67]

Concurring that Taixu came to stress the unity of Buddhism early in his monastic career, Gao Yongxiao argues that one can discern in the monk's writings three distinct stages of reflection on the issue of the unity and diversity of Buddhist teaching *(fofa de panshe)*.[68] In the first period of the reformer's religious life, Gao says, from about 1908 to 1914, Taixu followed the traditional method of distinguishing between a *zong*, or "lineage," and a *jiao*, or "school." A *zong* primarily emphasized the transmission of enlightenment experiences, while a *jiao* focused on certain highly prized scriptures and the transmission of enlightened understandings about the human situation and the nature of reality.

During the second phase of Taixu's career, from 1915 to 1923, after extensive studies of the Chinese Tripiṭaka during his *biguan*, the monk began to emphasize the fundamental interrelationship between Nikāya Buddhism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.[69] Indeed, notes Gao, Taixu began to highlight the teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* that in fact "there is only one Dharmic vehicle, not two or three."[70] The Śrāvakayāna *(shengwen sheng)*, the Pratyekabuddhayāna *(yuanjue sheng)*, and the Bodhisattvayāna *(pusa sheng)* were just expedient expressions of the one Buddhayāna *(fo sheng)*. The eight schools of Buddhism, Taixu thought, represented only different aspects of the one true Dharma, which is adapted according to the various needs of its hearers. Shengyan observes:

> According to Taixu, "There are many tributaries of the Dharma, yet the source is one." True Suchness, being the essence of the Dharma, is one and undifferentiated. Differences among the treatises are for promoting the effect of preaching. Taixu divided the teachings into the Prajñā (Sanlun [Mādhyamika]) School emphasizing "Selectivity," the Yogācāra [Weishi] School emphasizing "Existence," and the True Suchness Schools (Chan, Tiantai, Xianshou [Huayan], and Esoteric [Zhenyan]) emphasizing "Emptiness." He also explained these three emphases in terms of the three natures noted in Yogācāra: the Prajñā School emphasizes the nature of wrong discrimination, the Yogācāra School emphasizes the nature of dependence on others, and the True Suchness Schools the nature of perfect knowledge. All three are perfect teachings, despite their different functions.[71]

John Blofeld once remarked, after a conversation with Taixu about the great diversity of traditions within the Buddhist household,

"I comfort myself with the words of the Venerable Taixu who declared that the various sects are like beads in the same rosary and that each one of them is the best approach for certain individuals."[72] Although Taixu acknowledged that every person must begin his or her pilgrimage through earnest study of one particular school's teaching about the truth, he judged that all practitioners would finally realize that the same goal could be reached by different routes. Thus, he concluded, "Upāya *(fangbian)* has many gates, but in returning to the origin *(gui yuan)*, there are not two roads."[73]

According to Gao, during the third phase of Taixu's career, from 1923 to 1947, he "distinguished between 'schools' *(jiao)*, 'doctrines' *(li)*, and 'actions' *(xing)* in order to organize a comprehensive presentation of Śākyamuni's transmission of Dharma."[74] As Chou Hsiang-kuang shows in outlined detail, in his teaching Taixu used "schools" as a category for explaining the historical development of the various Nikāya, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna traditions, as well as for introducing Pali, Chinese, and Tibetan, the languages that he judged to be most critical for advanced Buddhist studies. Under the category of "doctrines," Taixu explored with his students basic Buddhist teachings about karma, saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, and conditioned origination, as well as the more difficult Mahāyāna doctrines of buddha-nature, mind-only, and so forth. The category of normative Buddhist "actions" provided Taixu with a framework for a detailed discussion of Buddhist morality in terms of the five vows *(wu jie)*, the ten forms of good action *(shi de)*, and the great career of the bodhisattva in wise and compassionate service to all.[75]

As Yang Huinan points out, it was also in this third period, after 1923, that Taixu began frequently to refer to an important threefold distinction within Buddhism to embrace the scope of its doctrine—namely, the Dharma common to the Five Vehicles, the Dharma common to the Three Vehicles, and the distinctive Dharma of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna).[76] As discussed in Chapter 4, his central points were that the basic moral precepts required of all beginners on the path toward enlightenment remain significant for more advanced followers, and that reliance on only one part of the teachings is unproductive.

Just as Taixu had entered sealed confinement in 1914 with a certain amount of fanfare, so he came out of seclusion on February 4, 1917 with more than the usual attention. Reichelt says that, on the appointed day for the monk's return to society, a number of abbots, Buddhist scholars, and dignitaries gathered at Putuo Shan, formed a procession, and proceeded to Taixu's cloister. "Salvoes of firecrackers were discharged," he writes, "and a solemn mass was offered in front of his cell. Then the red seal was removed by the abbot and the hero was led out and acclaimed with enthusiasm."[77] Acutely aware of the great conflagration that raged on in Europe, of China's own instability, and of disorder within the sangha, the twenty-seven-year-old Taixu immediately began traveling to important monasteries throughout central China and visiting colleagues among the more conservative monastic leaders, such as Yuanying, as well as the more radical, like his old colleague Renshan.

Invigorated by the experience of confinement and more determined than ever to make a difference in advancing the Dharma in an age of confusion, Taixu also accepted invitations to travel to Japan and Taiwan (then a Japanese colony) to consult with other Asian Buddhist leaders about the present and future condition of their religion. He talked constantly about the dilemmas of a war-weary world, the bankruptcy of western culture, the certain demise of Christianity, the problems of Buddhist sectarianism, and the possibilities for the development of a "new Buddhism." Yet as Xuming has emphasized, Taixu never used the term "new" in any popular sense of the term (i.e., to mean "western," "foreign," "ultramodern," or "anti-traditional"). Rather, he claims, the reformer always intended "new" in the sense of the true, original essence of Chinese Buddhism, which needed to be rediscovered.[78]

That rediscovered essence of wisdom and compassion, embodied by the bodhisattva, was for Taixu the hope of all sentient beings. History had shown that neither western humanism nor western religion could adequately support the creation of a global culture. Yet Mahāyāna Buddhism, Taixu confidently proclaimed, could provide the foundation for a lasting world peace that would be an Asian gift to

the rest of the world. As he concluded in a lecture at the Yunhua tang, in the city of Zhanghua in central Taiwan, in October 1917:

> Buddhism is representative of East Asian civilization. Now Christianity, which is representative of contemporary Western civilization, has already at this point lost its religious power in Europe and America. Europeans and Americans have thus lost their basis for a secure life and the fulfillment of their destiny. It is because of this fact that the great World War is now taking place. We ought to proclaim our East Asian good word of peace and spread Buddhism universally throughout the world in order to change their murderous perversions and save all beings from great disaster.[79]

ORGANIZING AND EDUCATING "NEW MONKS"

After his travels through Japan and Taiwan, and after consultations with Zhang Taiyan and Wang Yiting, Taixu instigated his reformist movement with the founding in Shanghai, in August 1918, of the Bodhi Society (Jue she).[80] During his *biguan,* Taixu had spent considerable time on imaginative plans for reorganizing the Chinese sangha, a project he considered as necessary as it was difficult. The first of several versions of his *Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* (The Reorganization of the Sangha System) was written in 1915, in response to the threat presented by the Regulations for the Control of Monasteries and Temples. Yet Taixu recognized that the ultimate reception of such a controversial proposal would require the establishment of bases of monastic and lay support that could serve as effective organs for propaganda. The Bodhi Society—so named, said Taixu, "because of my long-cherished hope that the world could be saved through Buddhism"—was to be one such base.[81] According to Xuming, the founding of the organization constituted "the beginning of Taixu's new Buddhist movement."[82] With its creation, the number of the reformer's followers began to increase rapidly. The society's explicit purposes, noted

Taixu, were "to publish research, edit collected works, sponsor lectures on Buddhism, and encourage religious cultivation."[83] The monk himself later recalled:

> The next year [1918], I was invited to visit the South Sea Islands [where there are colonies of prosperous Chinese emigrants]. I formed the idea of building a National Monastery. My observation leads me to feel that the monastic institutions in our country have fallen away from ancient pure ideals and are corrupt beyond reform. If I could raise the funds from people abroad, I would build the national monastery [as a model of renewed and purified monasticism]. If I should fail to attain my object I would reconcile myself to the life of a wandering mendicant and, leaning upon Buddha's mercy, thus travel to my life's end.
>
> When I was at Putuo, some of my earnest devotees requested me to lecture on "Weishi lun."... I talked to them about my wish to reform monastic institutions and my plan to go south. They also saw the works I have written. They strongly advised against the southern trip at the time as the European War was at its height, and it would be difficult to raise money there, but urged me to publish my works and to organize a society for the promotion of Buddhism in China as the first step of my larger plans. And so we organized the "Bodhi Society" in Shanghai.[84]

The initial announcement of the Bodhi Society reveals the organization's aim to promote "self-enlightenment and the enlightenment of others" and its rules designed to nurture those on the bodhisattva path. The basic bylaws read as follows:

I. Purpose:
   A. To set forth the true principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism to cause those who slander the truth to repent, those who doubt to have faith and understanding, those who believe and understand to put their faith into action, and those who understand and practice their religion to witness to others; to transform fools and common people, radicals and ultraconservatives into sages, saints, and buddhas.
   B. To proclaim the true principles of Mahāyāna Buddhism to turn those who are cruel and evil into benevolent people and

those who are greedy and belligerent into righteous people; so that the wise will rejoice in the way and the strong will honor morality; to turn this war-torn and suffering world into a place of peace and happiness.

II. Regulations for members . . . :

A. Rules for self-cultivation:

1. Required practices:

a. To take refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and take the four universal vows of a bodhisattva to make definite one's faith and resolve.

b. To observe the ten great precepts for the laity as found in the *Brahmajāla Sūtra*. If a member is not immediately able to observe all of the precepts, then he should select one or two of them and gradually increase the number until he is in compliance with all the right actions.

c. To reflect on perfect knowledge, investigate the essence of the mind, study the Buddhist scriptures, and practice bodhisattva behavior in order to develop your own wisdom.

2. Special regular practices:

a. To reflect on the [teachings of the] Chan school,

b. To support the teachings of the Zhenyan school,

c. To chant the Mahāyāna scriptures,

d. To recite the name of Amitābha,

e. To practice one form of meditation *(zhiguan)*,

f. Or to engage in several of these practices simultaneously.

3. Things to be done at one's convenience: to worship, offer repentance, and make donations. Practice all these things properly as opportunities arise in all times and places.

B. Regulations about group activities for the entire membership . . . :

1. On the eighth day of the fourth month, members should gather for one day to observe the birthday of Buddha by fasting, offering penance, releasing living beings, making donations, and doing other meritorious deeds.

2. Beginning on the evening of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, and continuing for seven days, members should hold a meeting for reciting the name of Buddha *(nian fo hui)*. The time should be limited so as to attain a oneness of mind without confusion.

3. Each year, from the first to the eighth day of the twelfth month, members should hold a meeting for meditation *(can chan hui)*. The time should be limited so as to become enlightened to the original Mind from which all things arise.[85]

Late during the next year, following the Beijing demonstration in May 1919 at which students protested the government's humiliating policy toward Japan and the outcome of the Versailles peace negotiations, the headquarters of the Bodhi Society were moved from Shanghai to Hangzhou, as Taixu moved to the Jingfan yuan near the West Lake. Shortly thereafter, in early 1920, the *Jueshe congshu*, the organization's quarterly magazine that Taixu edited, was renamed *Haichao yin* and became a monthly publication. In a relatively short time, it was to become the most important and widely read Buddhist periodical of the Republican period. Its goal was the exploration of models for the organization and education of "new monks." Although Taixu was obviously directing events to achieve his long-range goals, his own recollection, not surprisingly, is self-deprecating. He wrote in 1920:

> Lately I have been living in Jingfan yuan monastery, on the side of the Western Lake, Hangzhou. Here I had desired to live quietly for the practice of contemplation, but the members of the Bodhi Society have asked me to edit a new magazine, called *Haichao yin* [The Voice of Sea Waves] to meet the needs of the time. I have consented to do it for one year, as the work is congenial to my original wish, and so for this year, I have decided to lay aside other work and devote myself to editing the magazine. But at the close of ten thousand years, the Tathāgata will surely raise up men to establish the Law and spread it throughout the world of the living.[86]

The society's publishing effort—for which Taixu was able to secure financial assistance from interested laypersons—aimed both at religious instruction and institutional reform. The ultimate goal of *Haichao yin* was no less than a modernizing transformation of Chinese Buddhist piety and of the institutional structures that could encourage and support an expression of that piety. Observed Tsu:

> It aims to lift the voice of Mahāyāna Buddhism for the guidance of mankind tossed as it is by the waves of modern thought. The magazine contains (1) exposition of Buddhist doctrines, as for instance a new commentary of "Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra" (Awakening of Faith); (2) apologetics or defense of the faith in face of modern criticism; (3) advocacy of reformation, as reorganization of the monastic order; (4) testimonials: stories of conversion experience, lives of saintly devotees, etc.; (5) critical review of works on religion and philosophy, especially on Buddhism. It is of high quality and is edited by Taixu Fashi himself.[87]

The significance of the appearance of the innovative Chinese Buddhist periodical was soon acknowledged by the Japanese editors of the international journal, *The Eastern Buddhist,* who wrote:

> The Kaichoou *(Haichao yin),* a Buddhist monthly, published at Wuchang under the editorship of Rev. Taixu is full of interest and information. This we wish to be the real beginning of a general re-awakening of interest in Buddhism throughout the length and breadth of the Middle Kingdom, which produced in the past so many saintly souls and spiritual leaders contributing to the ever-upward progress of Eastern civilization, and where Buddhism, fully assimilated by the native genius and mode of feeling, has resulted in the creation of its special form now designated as Zen or Chan.[88]

One of the first articles published in 1920 in *Haichao yin* was from Taixu's *Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* (The Reorganization of the Sangha System), composed in first draft during his period of sealed confinement. According to Callahan, the essay "took the Chinese Buddhist world by storm."[89] Although the specifics changed slightly in later revised versions, as discussed in Chapter 5 below, Taixu's plan called for Chinese Buddhism to be reshaped institutionally with new model monasteries, benevolent organizations, and educational ventures. It required higher levels of education for all monks and nuns in view of the increasing levels of education in the general populace. It proposed productive physical labor by all able-bodied monastics so that the community could be self-supporting, eliminating the need for the decadent commercialism of masses for the dead. Taixu also envisioned monasteries and temples more as places of study and meditation than as centers for esoteric rites. Accordingly, an exemplary national monastery was to be established, complete with a massive library and a museum of Buddhist art and artifacts open for research. Affiliated with it would be a network of related institutes for Buddhist studies, as well as centers for Dharma proclamation and meditation.

As Taixu refined his plan in the years that followed, he chose to address not only the issue of the sangha's functional organization but the question of how many monastics were needed to propagate Buddhism in China. His recommendations eventually called for drastic reductions in the size of the monastic community, while redefining the sangha's role vis-à-vis society to reflect his own form of ethical piety. Under his controversial scheme, a moderate number of professional monks would perform good works for the benefit of society as a whole (such as operating schools, orphanages, and hospitals) under the direction of a small cadre of highly educated scholar-monks who were experts in Buddhist doctrine, and complemented by an almost equally small number of elderly monks who specialized in spiritual

cultivation through meditation and chanting. The great majority of monks, who Taixu thought shouldn't really be called monks at all, would engage in manual labor to support the propagation of the religion by those most able to do so in a modern society. Welch comments:

> Between 1915 and 1947 he produced seven more versions [of his plan for reorganizing the sangha], each representing an evolution over the last. None was ever put into practice: they were, in fact, so impracticable and so grandiose that it is hard to see how they could have been taken seriously. Rather, as if he were a child deploying regiments of toy soldiers, Taixu divided up the sangha into departments, each with its own specialty. For example, according to one of his later schemes, China was to have ten thousand scholar monks, who earned academic degrees in four grades according to the number of years they spent at study. The highest grade would consist of eight hundred monks with the Ph.D., each of whom had studied for nine years. Twenty-five thousand monks were to engage in good works (nine thousand teaching Buddhism, seven thousand running hospitals, orphanages, and so on). Finally, a small number of elders would run sixty centers of religious cultivation *(xiu lin)*, at which a thousand monks would meditate and recite Buddha's name. This accounted for only thirty-six thousand of China's half a million monks. What would have happened to the rest is unclear. Perhaps Taixu expected that many of them would disrobe to avoid manual labor and military service, both of which he is said to have favored for monks. With the sangha reduced to scholars and functionaries, there would not have been funerary specialists to perform rites for the dead, but this objection carried no weight with Taixu, for such rites were something of which, by now, he tended to disapprove. Indeed, he seems sometimes to have had grave doubts about monkhood itself.[90]

Taixu, with his "utopian propensity," was convinced that Buddhism could revitalize itself in the twentieth century through educational modernization, social service, and international cooperation. His greatest accomplishment in the area of monastic education was the Wuchang Buddhist Institute (Wuchang foxue yuan), founded in 1922. According to Earl Herbert Cressy, Taixu moved in that year

from Hangzhou in Zhejiang province to the Wuchang and Hankou area in Hubei province because "he found the monasteries in Hangzhou too conservative to welcome his more up-to-date attitude."[91] In Hankou, in contrast, his lectures on modern Buddhist reform soon inspired the establishment of a new lay organization, the Right Faith Buddhist Society of Hankou (Hankou fojiao zhengxin hui), for which Taixu served as "Guiding Master" *(daoshi)*. The society soon built a large three-story complex for its publishing and educational activities, and by 1933 claimed a membership of thirty thousand.[92] Still, Taixu's principal concern at the time was the creation of his new type of monastic school across the Yangzi River in the neighboring city of Wuchang. Cressy reports:

> Upon the arrival of the Monk Taixu in Wuchang, in 1922, there was an emphasis upon securing better educated leaders for Buddhist monasteries and associations. Accordingly a college was established which had a plant consisting of three main buildings and ample accommodations for classrooms, service departments, and living quarters for faculty and students.
>
> About $60,000 was expended in establishing the school. For the first two years it was conducted on a modest basis, but later it was divided into a number of departments. The writer visited this school in 1925 and interviewed Taixu, its head. The seventy students in residence were middle-school graduates and were a very intelligent and keen group of young men.[93]

With the generous support of lay Buddhist leaders Li Yinchen, Chen Yuanbai, Wang Senpu, Li Kaicheng, and others, Taixu's seminary in Wuchang became a pioneer in Buddhist education. The school adopted the western educational format of lecture and discussion classes. It employed monastic and lay instructors, provided blackboards for use by teachers and students, and required academic course work not only in Buddhist studies and languages but in secular subjects, such as history, literature, and psychology, as well.[94] Its excellent library was renowned for a collection that eventually included more than forty thousand books. Because of the success of Taixu's innovations, the Wuchang Buddhist Institute gained recognition as an edu-

cational model for Buddhist seminaries throughout China. James B. Pratt, who visited the seminary in 1923, reported attending one of the lectures after a pleasant private interview with the master:

> At the lecture were sixty-three students, all but five of them being monks. Taixu lectured without notes and very easily, making constant use of the black board. Each student had a copy of the sūtra that was being expounded, and followed the lecture eagerly, taking careful notes. I gathered from what my interpreter told me that his lectures were less abstruse than those of Mr. Ouyang [Jingwu]. His influence must be considerable. If sixty monks, or half that number, can be sent out every year with his impress upon them, there is still hope for Chinese Buddhism.
>
> Taixu's aim, he told me, is chiefly to make Buddhism known as it really is. He is the more hopeful that his effort in this direction will bear fruit, because it is in response to a real demand. Chinese students are returning every year from Europe and America, or graduating from colleges in China, and demanding to know what Buddhism is. The question, he insists, must be answered from Chinese sources—from the great Mahāyāna sūtras—and in a scholarly and philosophical way. His primary aim is, therefore, scholarly and philosophical. Solid knowledge and solid thinking must form the basis of anything lasting in the way of a Buddhist revival. Only indirectly does he hope to spread Buddhism among the common people.[95]

Taixu's modernization extended well beyond the five seminaries that eventually came under his direct authority. Conservative leaders disparaged the broader scope of education available in Taixu's seminaries, maintaining that it served only to distract monks and nuns from the more essential elements of a uniquely Buddhist style and content to learning. Yet many Chinese Buddhists found a more comprehensive form of education especially relevant given the intellectual challenges in the wake of the "May Fourth Movement" and the anti-religion activities of the 1920s. While others debated his methods, Taixu never altered his course or wavered in his insistence that students seek to understand the Dharma in relation to the social and political issues of the day. Nevertheless, after 1934, financial difficulties forced the closure of the groundbreaking school at Wuchang, and the plant was occupied by soldiers, as it had been for a brief period in 1929. Attempts to revive the school by transferring it to Beijing ultimately failed to continue its operation beyond 1937, when the war with Japan made funding extremely scarce.

Meanwhile, Taixu founded and directed other monastic schools, each theoretically a part of his World Buddhist Institute. The seminary in Beijing at the Bolin si (Bolin si jiaoli yuan), which, like the Wuchang Buddhist Institute, was to specialize in English-language studies, functioned only for the 1930–1931 academic year.[96] Taixu's important South Fujian Seminary (Minnan foxue yuan) in Xiamen (Amoy), which specialized in Japanese-language study, functioned from 1925 to 1939. His seminary in Chongqing, Sichuan (Han Zang jiaoli yuan), specializing in Tibetan studies, was in operation from 1932 to 1949. And in Xi'an, Shaanxi, the seminary that he established at the Daxingshan si (Bali sanzang yuan), specializing in Pali studies, functioned for only a short period after its founding in 1945.[97]

Taixu was not only a pioneer administrator concerned with new structures for monastic education but a popular Buddhist lecturer who was able to adjust the tone and content of his messages to the special character of different audiences. On the one hand, he could explicate for his students in the classroom the difficult metaphysical theories of Weishi idealism. On the other hand, though he viewed Buddhist devotionalism as a *upāya* (skillful means), he could speak impressively for the laity on the glories of the pure lands. In fact, when Taixu had been appointed head monk of the West Lake's Jingci si in the spring of 1921, he had urged the transformation of the traditional meditation hall *(chan tang)* into a "horned tiger hall" *(jiaohu tang)*, "so as to continue the complementary practice of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism that was the custom of Yongming Yanshou [904–975]."[98] Moreover, Taixu and his seminarians from Wuchang effectively used Protestant-style worship services in brightly illuminated street chapels to attract potential followers. Describing Taixu's accomplishments in Hankou in the 1920s, Reichelt commented:

> A new and interesting scene was revealed when darkness fell. A door had been opened wide and people from the street poured in to the preach-

ing-chapel where an imposing image of Amitābha stood at the rear. The niche where the image was set up was brilliantly illuminated by electric bulbs. The radiant figure of Amitābha and the music from the organ soon had their effect and the hall became completely filled. A sermon began, followed by short "testimonies" from the students. Taixu had impressed upon his assistants that on such occasions it was best to concentrate upon the message of the Pure Land School, because this was all the ignorant people could understand. In this way Buddhists could compete better with Christians who had made so much progress in China especially through evangelism in street chapels.[99]

Taixu was good at planning for his mission ventures and often sent disciples ahead of his scheduled visits to different areas to prepare the community for his preaching and teaching activities. In addition, his disciples frequently engaged in mission trips of their own when the master could not be present. For example, A. J. Brace, a YMCA official in Chengdu, reported that efforts to increase membership in his own Christian organization had been "seriously hurt" by the visit to the city in 1922 of some of Taixu's students. Providing us with a helpful picture of the new form of missionary endeavors that the Buddhist reformer actively encouraged, Brace wrote:

> In the summer of 1922 disciples of the famous monk Taixu journeyed from Shanghai to Chengdu in Sichuan Province to bring the modernized message of Buddhism as taught by their master. Their coming was the occasion of great rejoicing, and a real revival of Buddhism was the result. They had been heralded for more than a year and their way was prepared by a wide circulation of Taixu's popular magazine, "Haichao yin"—"The Voice of the Sea," or "The Sound of the Tide." Very carefully edited articles had prepared the people for the visit of the missionaries, and the new message found a ready response even before their arrival. It brought a message of peace for the troubled days, and the magazine clearly stated that the new message was destined to lift the sublime teachings of the Mahāyāna Doctrine for the help of the people tossed about in the sea of modern doubt. The message was essentially spiritual and taught, or stood for, three propositions, (1) a real desire to reform monasticism, (2) a plan to reconstruct Buddhist theology along lines of modern philosophy, (3) to use the teachings of Buddha to elevate the people and improve social conditions.
>
> On the arrival of the missionaries, they were welcomed officially by the Governor of the Province. The sixteen daily papers all joined in a welcome, and gave columns to the new teaching, thus supplying a liberal supply of advertising. The opening meetings were attended by large crowds who listened attentively to the new program, and large numbers voluntarily enrolled themselves for the daily course to be given. In fact, a real program was gotten out, much like a university course, or a summer school curriculum, and fees charged for the course. Then daily the large hall in the Public Garden of the Manchu City was thronged with auditors to hear the public addresses, and the class rooms were filled with eager students to listen and follow the course throughout.
>
> A thorough course was given in the history of Buddhism, what it had done for the world, and how it had become encrusted with many superstitions. Now all was changed. The old simple story of the Enlightened One and how he found the way of salvation was declared. Idolatry was opposed, and in bygone days it was only tolerated as an accommodation to the weakness of the ignorant people. Now education was to be stressed, the priests had always been ignorant. A Buddhist university was to be established. The monks were to be encouraged to be busy as learners and servants of the people rather than follow the lazy lives of the past. The mercy of Buddha was taught and enjoined so that the wicked might be led to kindness, the selfish to righteousness, the hungry to find satisfaction in the doctrine. Most emphasized were the daily hours for fasting and meditation.
>
> A real revival was effected along these lines, and many of the foremost business and professional men took the vows and followed the course of meditation regularly. Many men who had not been interested in religion came under the sway of the new-found faith, and personally told me of the value of the hours of meditation and how their faith had been strengthened. The course on reading was followed widely. The students burnt incense daily as they read and meditated. At the meetings singing was indulged in, and often tunes quite similar to Christian tunes

were used, and one song with the refrain, "Take the name of Buddha with you." They even organized a Young Men's Buddhist Association which is going strong.[100]

Taixu also began enthusiastically to involve his seminarians and lay supporters in social service ministries. He asserted that the non-differentiation of self from others was the very basis of a bodhisattva's compassionate activities in the world, and that helping another person was coterminous with helping one's self. As a result, after Taixu's weekend sermons in Hankou, his students would commonly usher people in need of health care to rooms where physicians, who were among his lay disciples, provided free treatment and medicine, exemplifying a long tradition of Buddhist concern for healing.[101] He helped his disciples Miaoji and Hualin establish a modern school for children and a welfare program for the diseased, destitute, and jobless. It was reported that they "used to go around to the sick with medicines, dressing wounds and distributing articles to the needy."[102]

The previously mentioned Right Faith Buddhist Society of Hankou became one of the most socially active lay Buddhist associations in the country. In accord with Taixu's emphasis on social responsibility, the society operated a clinic that provided free medical treatment for the poor, administered a free primary school for children of low-income families, donated coffins to families who could not afford them, funded a non-Buddhist social service agency that provided assistance to indigent widows, distributed food to needy families on holidays, served meals in fire catastrophes, and rescued people and animals in flood crises.[103] Most of the major cities of China developed similar lay Buddhist organizations, with laity *(jushi)* active in a variety of religiously motivated pursuits, in order "to propagate the Dharma and to benefit humanity."[104] Seeking to characterize the type of lay believers who were often attracted to Taixu's teachings and whose devotion was a driving force in aspects of the effort at Buddhist revitalization, John Blofeld once wrote:

> The jushi [lay devotees] are often men of considerable learning as well as faith and piety, they sometimes exhibit a more profound understanding of Buddhist philosophy than many of the monks and nuns. To this learning they add active observance of the teaching that the utmost compassion should be shown to all sentient beings. . . .
>
> The jushi is usually a cultured person. He prefers to wear the dignified Chinese gown of blue, gray or bronze-coloured silk, and by his habits and gestures, exhibits his fondness for and understanding of the traditional culture of his country. He is often a poet or painter as well as a philosopher and metaphysician, and may be something of a historian or possess a knowledge of Chinese herbal medicine in addition. . . . They often show themselves to be far above the vulgar superstitions which have done much to lower the tone of the great moral and metaphysical system created by the Indian sage Gautama.[105]

In the early 1920s, Taixu also initiated a new program of Buddhist visitation to prisons, encouraging students at his seminary in Wuchang to minister to the incarcerated. It was recognized as an innovative program by most Buddhists, although the charter of the 1912 Chinese General Buddhist Association, founded in Shanghai, had at least called for prison visitation.[106] Perhaps Taixu's program was interpreted as new because there had been little or no actual response to this element of the association's 1912 charter. Emphasizing the Christian precedents for such activities and describing Taixu's program as merely imitative, the missionary-scholar Reichelt comments:

> Taixu had noticed that Christian missionaries and some Chinese evangelists had obtained permission from the authorities to visit the public gaols in order to speak to the prisoners. It was even described in the newspapers because quite a number of prisoners had become converted and had left the gaols as new men. This challenged Taixu. Why should not Buddhists do the same? He placed the matter before his students, and of course everybody offered for service. Taixu applied to the authorities and permission was given. . . .
>
> Prisoners used to gather in a large room and young Buddhist monks in their dignified robes performed with the greatest eloquence as "teaching masters" to this mixed audience. They too were "written up" in the newspapers.[107]

After a time, enthusiasm waned among students at the Wuchang Buddhist Institute, and the prison program lost much of its momentum. Yet despite Taixu's eventual disappointment with this development in Wuchang, the idea of prison ministries did spread to other Buddhist groups and to other parts of China.[108]

Through all these educational and human service activities, Taixu sought to respond to the demands of the time while recalling what he considered to be the true nature of his religious tradition. He wanted Chinese Buddhists to build on an essential dimension of their Mahāyāna heritage that had been overlooked and inadequately developed. In view of criticisms by Christians who facilely contrasted their own tradition's social consciousness with the blatantly self-centered spirituality of Buddhists, the reformer tried to present those on the bodhisattva path as members of a socially responsive and morally responsible religious community.

In large measure, of course, Taixu shared with Christian missionaries a critical outlook on "real" Chinese Buddhism—that is, the religion as "commonly practiced" in the Republican period. At the same time, however, he envisioned an "ideal" Chinese Buddhism that could change forever not only the future of Asia but that of the entire world. Indeed, it was to the task of articulating more clearly aspects of that projected global religion that Taixu was to give much of his time and energy during the last half of his monastic career.

CHAPTER 3

AN ECUMENICAL VISION FOR GLOBAL MISSION

During the last thirty years of his life, in addition to his efforts in the field of monastic education, Taixu devoted considerable energy to the establishment of regional and world Buddhist organizations. Xuming asserts that the reformer's growing interest in the 1920s in the global organization of Buddhists reflected a definite strategic decision on his part. At first, Taixu believed that the reorganization and reform of the monastic and lay communities within the Chinese Buddhist household would lead, rather naturally and directly, to the spiritual transformation of the nation and, eventually, of the entire world. However, given the failures and obstacles related to this internal Chinese reformation, Taixu began to think more expansively about organizing an ecumenical Buddhist movement on a global scale. Thus, while continuing efforts at institutional reform within the Chinese sangha, he hoped to find a way to bring together progressive-minded monks and laypeople from many nations who were prepared to commit themselves to a Buddhist mission to the world. It would be the conversion of the Christian West that would facilitate the thorough revitalization of Buddhism in East Asia and the shaping of a global Buddhist culture in which the enlightenment of every living being would be possible.[1]

Yet except for his brief visits to Taiwan and Japan in 1917, it was not until after 1923 that the Chinese master had any concrete oppor-

number of controversial initiatives. Many Chinese revered him as one who truly understood the Dharma and lived in harmony with the Dao. Some thought him an exemplary leader whose mission contributed not only to the vitality of the Buddhist community but to the nation's cause in years of crisis. Others, both inside and outside of the Chinese sangha, questioned the purity of his motives and faulted him for pride and self-interest. Many conservative leaders within the monastic community did not like his humanist leanings and distrusted his utopian visions for a reorganized religious community. Thus Welch is correct in stating that the majority of Chinese Buddhists in Taixu's time felt considerable ambivalence about him:

> They were pleased that one of their own had managed to become so famous, and they acknowledged the value of some of his ideas, but he did not correspond to their concept of what a monk ought to be. He seemed to them to talk about Buddhism more than he practiced it. The monks they most respected—Xuyun, Yinguang, Dixian, Hongyi, Laiguo, Tanxu—were persons for whom practice was of the essence, who remained aloof from the world rather than seeking for status in it, who wanted to restore Buddhism to what it had been rather than make it into something new. They feared that, if it were made into something new as Taixu seemed to be proposing, it would no longer be Buddhism.[116]

Making Chinese Buddhism into "something new" was at the heart of Taixu's career. When the reformer spoke of a "new Buddhism," "new monks," and a "new global culture," many naturally wanted to cling to the old and familiar. Yet Taixu believed that the scientific revolution had redefined the context for religious commitment in the modern era. Chinese Buddhists, he argued, could not simply "go back" to revalorize the common practices of the past; preaching the Dharma effectively in the future would require something more. Going boldly forward naturally meant reaching back to recover the courageous and caring spirit of the one who originally discovered the Dharma in our age, but it simultaneously meant change and adaptation to a new and evolving social world.

CHAPTER 4

MAHĀYĀNA AND THE MODERN WORLD

Yu-yue Tsu has asserted that the first phase of the revival of Chinese Buddhism that began during the final years of the Manchu dynasty was primarily political rather than spiritual in nature. That is, the most important attempts to reform and reenliven the Chinese Buddhist community during the waning years of the Qing and the initial years of the Republican period were predominantly organizational in character.[1] Deeply troubled about Buddhism's precarious position within Chinese society, members of the sangha as well as laity pondered how to reorganize their religious community in order to respond more effectively to changing circumstances. They were concerned about both negative external perceptions of their tradition and internal Buddhist problems. Neither, they realized, would be easy to address. Many intellectuals and ordinary citizens alike saw no relationship between the practice of Buddhism and efforts to remake and strengthen the nation. In addition, the sangha seemed helpless to deal with the debilitating issues of regionalism, factionalism, and the erosion of lay support caused by the large numbers of monks seeking personal gain by performing rites for the dead.[2]

The principal reason for the failure of all the efforts in the first organizational phase of the Buddhist revival in the Republican period, Tsu concluded, was the obvious need for a prior spiritual reawak-

ening within the whole Chinese Buddhist community. What was required was the emergence of competent, consistent, and challenging visionary and ethical leadership. Writing in 1921, Tsu commented:

> The failure of the first wave of Buddhist revival to achieve spiritual results was in large measure due to the lack of a truly great spiritual leader. Now such a leader seems to have appeared in the person of Taixu fashi [Dharma Master Taixu], a monk of great learning and saintly character, and with his appearance has commenced the second wave of Buddhist revival. As the first was political in nature, the second is essentially spiritual. A genuine desire to reform monasticism, to reconstruct Buddhist theology according to modern philosophy, and to promote human welfare on the basis of the teachings of Buddha is the dominant note.[3]

Although Tsu's estimation of Taixu's role as the sole catalyst for a "second wave" of the Buddhist revival is overstated, the Chinese reformer did make an incomparable contribution to the revitalization of the Buddhist community in the Republican period. He did so by trying to relate Mahāyāna Buddhism to life in a new China, and by offering an engaging description of the bodhisattva's path in the twentieth century—a modernist, social-activist portrayal that some judged to be, according to traditional standards, a betrayal of Buddhism. Yet it was clearly a portrayal to which many sincere Chinese Buddhists rallied, and one in which many in the People's Republic of China, in Taiwan, and elsewhere continue to find hope.

Taixu conceived of his role as that of an interpreter of the ancient spiritual truths of Buddhism and expositor of their modern application. In that role, he expressed his concerns about the need for safeguarding religious freedom and raising Buddhist standards. Therefore, as Taixu claimed at Eight Fingers' funeral in 1912, he was strategically committed to advancing three "revolutions" within his religious community. With regard to an "organizational revolution," as we have seen, Taixu was a tireless theoretician, if not always an accomplished master at implementation. Concerning the sangha's needed "economic revolution," he sought to ensure the long-term financial stability of institutional Buddhism by calling for productive work by monks and closer ties to the growing number of educated laity.

Through an "intellectual revolution," the reformer hoped that Buddhists could learn to express the Dharma in ways that were inspired by scripture, faithful to the original spirit of Śākyamuni, and appropriate for the time.[4]

What China and the world needed most, Taixu asserted, was a revitalized Buddhist community intent on attaining enlightenment, invigorated by modern educational reforms, and involved in compassionate service in the ways of a true bodhisattva. As Frank Millican commented in 1923:

> At this time of general intellectual awakening and mingling of the social, political, and religious systems of the world, Buddhist thought in China is hidden in classical books, many of which are not easily available to the reading public. It is also truly bound by an ancient and stilted literary style which only expert scholars of Buddhism are able to read understandingly. The situation is even worse than that of Christianity in Europe before the Bible was printed in the vernacular. And, doubtless, history, as well as modern tendencies to discard or neglect anything that is not provided in convenient form, have forced upon Taixu and modern devotees of Buddhism the conviction that, if Buddhism is to survive, it must be restated not only in language which the ordinary scholar can readily understand but also in terms familiar to the modern mind.[5]

Accordingly, Taixu sought to restate Chinese Buddhism by emphasizing a particular form of Buddhist piety that he judged to be especially relevant to the modern world. This was a form of piety with elements that were certainly not without precedent in the history of Chinese Buddhism, but one that was given especially sharp focus in Taixu's life and work. As an ethical pietist, his basic understanding of his spiritual tradition tended to revolve around social responsibility. He was concerned that Mahāyāna Buddhism address the unique ills of the present age and engage in the transformation of this world into a pure land.

A conceptual revolution appeared crucial from Taixu's perspective because human thought patterns were intrinsically related to human actions. Commenting on the consequences of incorrect assumptions and perceptions for moral responsibility, he once observed:

the Republican period. That aim is complicated by the very size of the written record. The Chinese master was a popular lecturer and prolific writer who wrote an incredible number of books and essays.[8] Although he was clearly not the systematic expositor of doctrine that his most gifted student and biographer Yinshun eventually became, Taixu was certainly more than an activist "pamphleteer," as he has been called.[9] Indeed, his way of presenting both the theoretical and practical dimensions of the bodhisattva path set a pattern that became widely influential. Thus I highlight only some of the major themes in Taixu's reformist mission. My goal is not to offer a comprehensive account of Taixu's writings in relation to the three revolutions in organization, economy, and thought that he called for at Eight Fingers' funeral, but simply to characterize the direction and unique thrust of his teachings as he sought to help his co-religionists answer a persistent question of the day: Will Buddhism wither away in China or "will the religion of the Enlightened One that now flickers behind the walls of lonely cloisters and monkish cells flame forth again as the Light of Asia?"[10]

In view of the familiar appellation for Śākyamuni of "the Great Physician," I focus in this chapter on Taixu's own diagnoses of the primary "diseases" afflicting modern civilization, and on the life-saving first aid that he proposed—namely, "a Buddhism for human life." As Taixu once remarked, "The Buddha is called the Great Lord of Healing *(da yi wang)*. His Dharma heals the sick minds of this world, and the basic meaning of 'to save' *(ji)* is 'to heal' *(yi)*."[11] Like physicians who diagnose physical illnesses, Taixu offered his own assessments of contemporary forms of spiritual suffering that continue to stand in opposition to Buddhist images of the enlightened life. And just as doctors prescribe treatments and lifestyle regimens that can effectively restore the health of patients with serious diseases, so Taixu confidently offered a restated, modern form of Buddhism as the world's only hope for a more just and peaceful future. Indeed, in sharp contrast to the troubled, self-centered, and self-destructive society that he observed around him, the reformer spoke optimistically of a Buddhism for the living, and of a humanitarian utopia that could actually be realized in this world of time and space. On behalf of a suffering world not even fully conscious of the dimensions of its own suffering, the Buddhist master's goal was to shape a practical discipline of spiritual healing for all beings.

THE DILEMMAS OF MODERNITY

In his 1935 book, *Foxue de jianglai* (The Future of Buddhism), Taixu observed that modern science has created a radically new context for human existence, one with both beneficial and harmful consequences for many aspects of communal life. On the one hand, because of numerous technological advances, resources that enhance material standards of living have become extraordinarily plentiful throughout much of the world. The Industrial Revolution has led to a restructuring of economies that has permitted most people and communities to enjoy material advantages undreamed of a century before. On the other hand, Taixu asserted, this "blessing" has also become a terrible curse. Although from a material standpoint modern science may have made life "easier," it has simultaneously served to undermine traditional morality and produced chaos. As Taixu remarked,

> From now on, the lives of human beings will be naturally very rich in material things. This is because through scientific progress we are discovering an unlimited hidden treasury of natural resources for living. At the same time, by using scientific tools and methods we will continue to advance and strive for further progress. With regard to improving people's living standards, the significance and contribution of these tools and methods will be great.
>
> We know that the special gifts that science has bestowed on the lives of human beings can be said to be considerable. However, when the impact of science on human morality is carefully examined, it has not had a beneficial affect. In fact, not only has science not had a positive influence, but in the past few decades moral principles that have been established on a philosophical basis have undergone an increasingly critical attack from science and indeed have lost their foundation. [Furthermore,] moral principles that have been established on a religious basis of divine authority have also been overturned. Because of these

developments, throughout the world the central point of orientation for moral behavior has been completely lost.

With regard to the relation of science to morality, then, does it or does it not have a beneficial affect? From these developments we can fully understand [the correct answer]. As a result of scientific advances, our lives are becoming materially more prosperous each day, while simultaneously our consumer desires also increase. We are utilizing the knowledge and tools of science to the fullest extent in order to exploit the development of natural resources—what may be called the subduing of nature. Therefore while our technological capabilities are rapidly increasing, conflicts sparked by our ever-rising consumer desires and powers are also developing into serious crises unprecedented in history. Ours is becoming an age of intractable problems for which there will be no easy solutions.[12]

In the modern world of science, the failure of religious or theological ethical systems to provide adequate moral guidance, Taixu observed, may be understood by recognizing their weak and obsolete cornerstone. This foundational delusion may be identified as the belief that human beings are "children of the gods." All forms of traditional theistic systems, according to Taixu, transmit behavioral norms that are not established on any humanistic basis. The origins of their behavioral paradigms are clear: they originate from beyond the time and space continuum of human existence within this world. Historically, the Buddhist master admitted, theological ethics of this type have played an important part in the evolution of human society. In many cases in the past—where the belief in deities and their powers of retribution and blessing could be sustained—the attempts of various individuals and groups either to imitate the moral actions of their gods or to obey faithfully their divine commandments have contributed to creative and harmonious social orders. Throughout recorded history, many deeply religious persons, seeking earthly and paradisaical rewards and fearing eternal punishments, have sincerely tried to adhere to their society's sanctioned modes of behavior in both their private and public lives. However, in the contemporary world, Taixu stated, primitive theistic beliefs no longer carry any real force. Modern science has effectively swept away all god-language by correctly identifying it as a form of mere wish-fulfillment, as an ultimately debilitating self-deception. Therefore, Taixu concluded, any ethic for the present or future that is established on the injunctions, prohibitions, or expectations of heavenly deities has been totally undermined by science.

Philosophically derived ethical principles have enjoyed no more success. The primary reason for this, Taixu commented, is that all philosophical systems are based on the elaboration of particular human ideas and ideals that are inevitably in competition with other ideas and ideals. Because their origin lies fully within the realm of time and space, they have not been able to motivate and inspire all people to reach common understandings of the meaning of life and death—or to reach agreement on appropriate modes of action within community. In sum, philosophical principles are intrinsically relative and just as ineffective as theological principles when it comes to providing a viable foundation for a truly universal ethic in an age of modern science. Our basic dilemma, declared Taixu, is simply this: "Humanity has completely lost the centerpoint for morality."[13]

This fact has dangerous implications for the entire human community, claimed the Buddhist master, because scientific technology, however beneficial, is unmistakably related to the increasingly destructive spirit of consumerism that afflicts modern societies. That is to say, as human lives improve materially, human desires are fueled for ever greater pleasurable enhancements. Eventually, Taixu suggested, not only will the unequal distribution of goods become a volatile issue, but the capabilities of modern technology will not be able to keep pace with the perpetually increasing material desires of human beings. The consequence will be an unprecedented explosion of violence between the rich and poor—namely, between the privileged, who have both material goods and the power to control their distribution, and marginalized peoples who have neither goods nor power.

In the first two decades of the twentieth century, averred Taixu, the world witnessed the bloody prelude to that impending struggle. World War I should be seen as the opening drama in a modern social cataclysm. The lives and well-being of our ancient ancestors were

largely threatened by things and events in the natural world: poisonous snakes, carnivorous animals, floods, and other natural calamities. Yet these external threats now pale in comparison to those presented by the development of increasingly unrestrained and self-centered minds. Science may have diminished most external threats in nature, but it has also engendered new manifestations of internal threats latent in the human personality. Indeed, because the foundations for all religious and philosophical ethical systems have been eroded while technological advances have increased the desires for material goods, individual people consider only themselves and seek only to satisfy their own instinctive cravings. At times, many are quite willing to employ force to achieve their selfish aims, assaulting and killing one another in the process. "In the confrontation between nations, races, and socio-economic classes," the reformer observed, "each one exposes to the fullest extent the selfishness of their animal desires."[14] In sum, he concluded, the greatest contemporary threats to human life are "self-generated."

Taixu further charged that the egocentric mentality that leads to social inequalities and violence may be identified as the byproduct of a type of culture that has developed uniquely in the modern West. The reformer argued repeatedly that although western culture has made the greatest progress in improved standards of living in the material sense, it has failed miserably in the development of the moral life. Western culture is essentially "a culture of making and using tools," he asserted, one that has effectively raised expectations and desires for material possessions while suppressing human drives toward realization of the common good.[15]

Taixu was not an unsophisticated opponent of western science and technology. Nevertheless, his descriptions of the human condition in the modern world are reminiscent in many respects of Max Weber's discussion of the contemporary capitalist's "iron cage" of economic compulsion.[16] For example, addressing his Paris audience in 1928, Taixu remarked:

> Scientific discoveries have brought about a certain doubt as to religious evidence. The old gods and religions seem to have been shaken in the wind of science, and religious doctrines have no longer any defense, and the world at large seems to be handed over to the tyranny of the machine and all those monstrous powers to which science has given birth.[17]

Echoing this same theme in 1940, when visiting India, the reformer delineated three great historic cultures: those of India, China, and the Euro–North American West. Contrasting the three while pointing to the need for a cultural synthesis, he commented:

> You may take the cultures of the world and divide them into three kinds. The first is a culture that cultivates a holy and pure inner mind; the second, one that improves human relations; and the third, one that manages material capabilities. Developing respectively from these three types are Indian culture, Chinese culture, and Western culture. In the past, China and India have made enormous contributions to the world. However, now both are being influenced by the West. On the unfortunate path taken by Western culture, human beings and material things are considered to be of equal worth. Therefore the world's crises deepen every day. I hope that in the future we will not lean to any one extreme. Material resources must be developed while at the same time our spirits are cultivated and ethics emphasized.[18]

As these remarks suggest, according to Taixu, any remedy for this fundamental crisis of the modern world must be based on a careful examination of the relation between religion and culture. It is the development of culture that has distinguished the human species from the rest of the animal kingdom and marked its evolutionary transformation from a primitive to a civilized state. Religion, philosophy, government, economics, science, literature, the fine arts—all are important aspects of culture. However, religion is its most determinative single dimension, Taixu asserted. Religion represents a people's sense of ultimate meaning and value; it produces patterns of relationships and creates community.

In some of his writings, such as *Foxue de jianglai,* Taixu identified not three but four basic types of religio-cultural perspective. First there are cultures in which people seek primarily to alter the exter-

nal world—that is, to refashion their environment to create a more conducive context for human satisfaction and fulfillment. A second type of culture exhibits the opposite tendency, focusing not on external realities but on each person's inner spiritual nature. In such cultures, Taixu wrote, when people encounter inevitable hardships and perplexities, they characteristically seek to adjust not their external circumstances but, through concentrated introspection, their personal religio-philosophical worldview. The third type of culture is one in which people seek to change neither the external world nor their internal stance, but to remain in a state of utter passivity and nonassertive harmony with all things. Resignation rather than any kind of transformation characterizes this kind of culture.

A fourth type provides a totally different cultural ethos. In this most important type—to which societies shaped by Mahāyāna Buddhism belong—people seek fulfillment and enlightenment both by developing and adjusting the character of their own inner life and, simultaneously, by working to effect beneficial changes in the external world. As Taixu himself put it, "Such cultures plan to transform completely both internal and external realities."[19] If the dilemmas of the twentieth century are to be successfully addressed, he concluded, only such a religio-philosophical perspective will suffice.

Beyond the need for this fourth type of culture, a globalized community in crisis requires a religious faith that enables people to transcend the prejudices of their various local cultures. According to Taixu, such a community needs a truly universal religio-ethical system. Christianity has shaped the highly industrialized culture of Western Europe and the United States. Islam has shaped the Middle Eastern and African cultures, while Hinduism, or Brahmanism, has determined the cultural life of India. Yet of all the religious traditions in the world, he averred, it is Buddhism that has shown the greatest capacity for transcending the powerful ethnocentric particularities of local culture. From its origin on the Indian subcontinent in the sixth century B.C.E., the religion has spread throughout Central, Southeast, and East Asia, and within the last century even to the West. While traditions like Hinduism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto have never

escaped in any substantial way the boundaries of their respective homelands, Buddhism has achieved remarkable success in worldwide mission as a truly universal religion.

Moreover, the reformer emphasized, wherever the Dharma has been faithfully practiced, Buddhism's influence has been dramatically positive in every aspect of human life and achievement, demonstrating its great practical value for the establishment of human community. Such a beneficial influence could not be reasonably shown for Christianity, which, Taixu maintained, is in any case intellectually untenable in the modern world. Therefore, he declared, in selecting and synthesizing the best elements of local cultures to form a new "global culture," Buddhism must be a fundamental component. Without the fusion of eastern and western cultures and the adoption of Buddhism's unique spiritual principles, the consumer-oriented, technological civilization toward which the entire world is rapidly moving will have no foundation except that of an egocentric individualism, no future but competitive struggle and the exercise of power. Buddhism, he proposed, can provide the only basis for "a universal civilization and a universal philosophy" because it teaches that all sentient beings are one and that "all human egos are bound together by bonds of sympathy."[20]

In addition to a religio-cultural perspective that seeks to transform both internal and external realities and a religious tradition capable of transcending local cultures, there is a third requirement for addressing the dilemmas of modernity: namely, a religion fundamentally in harmony with science. On the one hand, Taixu asserted, a careful investigation reveals that "Buddhism is the only religion which does not contradict scientific truth."[21] Everything that modern scientific research has discovered about the complexity and interdependent nature of reality by using both telescopes and microscopes has served only to confirm the religio-philosophical insights found in the Mahāyāna scriptures. On the other hand, he claimed, Buddhist truth is also "unscientific" and not limited to the truths discovered through experimental research. While always in consonance with the insights of science, Dharmic truth transcends and perfectly completes

them. According to Taixu, scientists have not gone far enough in their research into the mysteries of nature. As they proceed, they will be able to verify, yet never disconfirm, the Dharma that the Buddha revealed. As Taixu once put it,

> The scientist claims that scientific knowledge is the whole truth and stops there. In this he resembles the blind man who, after examining the body of an elephant, declared the ear to be a fan and the tail a broom. If we compare the elephant and all the organs of its body to the universe, then the blind man may be compared to the scientist who has never realized an absolute, universal perception of the universe. Scientific methods can only corroborate the Buddhist doctrine; they can never advance beyond it. . . .
>
> Science, therefore, can never be the main support of Buddhism, although it may act as a valuable auxiliary and much may be expected from uniting the two methods of investigation. . . . The scientist, however, is constantly trying to improve his instruments rather than to perfect his inner vision. This is like depending on our bodily senses. The main principles of the Buddhist doctrine, therefore, are "unscientific" and sweep away all the false conclusions at which science has arrived. Otherwise, it would be impossible to overcome ignorance and attain enlightenment.
>
> If life, however, were founded on the six pāramitās—the six perfect virtues of the bodhisattvas—and these in turn were realized to be in accordance with scientific research, then we might hope to enter into the pure realms of Buddha and emerge from the chaos of fire and brimstone into which we have fallen.[22]

Summarizing elsewhere this same dialectical perspective on science and scientists, Taixu stated:

> Those who criticize science say that science is responsible for the weapons of warfare and therefore is harmful. Those who praise science point to the great material achievements of modern civilization which benefit mankind. We need not join the controversy, although those who have gone through the World War cannot be blind to some truth underlying this criticism. We should note, however, that the criticism refers to the fruits of science. Science itself is a method which is beyond criticism. Science is always open-minded, ready to discard what is disproved and to adopt what is verified, in order to reach the truth of reality. However, there is one obstinate superstition among scientists, and that is, they believe this scientific method is the only road for arriving at truth, and fail to realize that the ultimate reality of this universe cannot be penetrated by it.
>
> In general, what is a gain to science is a loss to religion. Those religions with doctrines of gods and souls fundamentally lack the stability of truth and are easily shaken. But Buddhism benefits by the discoveries of science. The more science progresses, the clearer Buddhism becomes, for Buddhism explains the truth concerning the universe. Take an illustration from astronomy. In ancient times, men thought of heaven as above and the earth below; then came Copernicus who taught that the sun was the center of our system. Now we have arrived at the idea that there is no one center anywhere in the astral universe. This supports the Buddhist conception of the great unlimited void, embracing numberless worlds, all interwoven like a spider web. Science helps us to understand Buddhism by offering suitable analogies. But the core of Buddhism science cannot reach, for it has to do with inward illumination, the direct insight into the reality of the universe, an intuitive experience only acquired by oneself, where all logic, analogy, or scientific hypothesis are of no avail. When scientists insist that theirs is the only method of arriving at truth, they remind one of blind men trying to understand an elephant by the sense of touch. They will get partial impressions of the different parts of the animal and what strange impressions as compared with a living elephant as seen by a man with normal eyesight.[23]

Wing-tsit Chan once observed that although Taixu argued vehemently that Buddhism was entirely harmonious with science and that Einstein's theory of relativity confirmed the basic insights of Buddhist idealistic philosophy, actually "Taixu did not know much about science or Einstein."[24] Of course, the extent of the monk's scientific education was limited. Nevertheless, in 1926 Frank Millican commented at length on the reformer's rationale in emphasizing the necessity of developing a "scientific Buddhism":

We shall be prepared to understand why Taixu attempts to associate Buddhism with science rather than with religion. He rejects anything that suggests the supernatural or metaphysical. Science, he observes, sticks close to the facts of experience and thus is in position to have its conclusions constantly checked up by means of further experiments. Buddhism, he claims, has this same scientific approach to the problem of the understanding of the nature of life and of the universe. Yet it is much broader in scope. It goes beyond a study of the physical sciences and includes the science of psychology. Since to Taixu, the Idealist, the universe in its final analysis is of the nature of mind there is no justification for the arbitrary limitation of the field of science to the so-called physical sciences. The scientific method should operate on different levels. There are, first, the so-called physical sciences based on the six senses. Then there is the scientific study of thought processes. Beyond this there is the more profound science of direct intuitive acquaintance or enlightenment known only to a few choice souls who have seen through the nature of existence and have come to a consciousness of reality beyond all the illusions and distractions of life. This experience is attained by means of quiet abstraction and intuitive response to the universe. The Buddhist Hall of Meditation is the laboratory for this more advanced type of scientific research. And the materials for the experiment are none other than one's own bodily senses and his mind. . . .

This more comprehensive view of science includes three stages. The first is a direct conscious experience of the things of our environment *(bianjue)*. The second is an understanding of the law which operates in our environment—the law *(lüfa)* of growth and decay and all the changes that take place in the phenomenal world. The third is the final stage of harmony in which one sees beyond the changing phenomena of existence and becomes conscious of reality—the reality in which there are no distinctions as this and that, good and evil, self and non-self. This final stage—which is salvation—in which the person has come to understand the three above stages of life is Taixu's goal for life. This stage of perfect Buddhahood, he tells us, involves a belief in Buddha, the Law, and the Order; it involves true faith and a belief in the law of cause and effect. It further involves conformity to the ten rules of good conduct and the ability to rise above the things of desire which are the cause of suffering.[25]

A BUDDHISM FOR HUMAN LIFE

Taixu located the convergence of the three religio-cultural elements required for addressing the contemporary crisis—namely, a tradition that transforms both the self and the world, that transcends local culture, and that is in harmony with science—in what he called a "Buddhism for human life," or "Buddhism for the living" *(rensheng fojiao)*. This was a theme that Taixu first began to explore in a 1928 lecture in Shanghai, and it was one that he continued to detail until his final lecture on the subject in Zhenjiang in August 1946.[26] As Hong Jinlian has remarked, this seminal concept is rooted in the various influences of late Qing modernism, Tiantai philosophy, Chan iconoclasm, and western scientific optimism.[27] On the one hand, in propagating a Buddhism for human life, Taixu was influenced by aspects of western humanism that were sweeping Asia and by the radical enthusiasm of the reformers of the New Culture Movement. In this sense he was a Chinese intellectual of his times, urging the nation to embrace the challenge of building a new country with new values within a new world order. In fact, he presented his "Buddhism for human life" as a complement to and perfection of Sun Yat-sen's form of nationalism. Thus, just as political leaders were taking the best of China's five-thousand-year-old culture and blending it with the best of western scientific culture to produce a "three-principles-of-the-people culture" *(sanmin zhuyi de wenhua)*, so Mahāyāna Buddhists were establishing connections between the best results of that process and the virtuous conduct of the first ten grades of bodhisattva faith *(shi xin wei)* in order to establish a practical Buddhism for the living.[28] On occasion, Taixu even referred to his own efforts in terminology that paralleled Sun's *sanmin zhuyi*, advocating a "three-principled Buddhism" *(sanfo zhuyi)* that entailed an ideal sangha of Dharma teachers *(foseng zhuyi)*, an ideal lay Buddhist order of active bodhisattvas *(fohua zhuyi)*, and a national culture infused with the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism and reaching out to the entire world *(foguo zhuyi)*.[29]

On the other hand, although external influences must be acknowledged, the sources of Taixu's position were profoundly Buddhist. Taixu wanted to focus attention on classic, if neglected, Mahāyāna themes about the nature of the truly enlightened life. Many

interpreters have failed to recognize this fact in explaining Taixu's teachings, as Hong has noted:

> Most people give greater attention to the fact that Taixu was following secular responses [to events of his time] and ignore the ultimately scriptural ideals of his Buddhism for human life. Because of this fact, most people think that the main point of his "Buddhism for human life" was a response to the conflict with the cultural ideals of Confucianism, or was merely blending harmoniously together the new knowledge of the world. That is to say, it represented a secularization [of Buddhism] and that's all. As Yinshun remarks in his article, "On Entering the World and Buddhism," "most people do not see the [true] sources of Taixu's Buddhism and think it reflects only popular trends and merely a kind of secularization, with the result that the meaning of essential Buddhism does not clearly present itself before the student."[30]

Indeed, Taixu did not aim to present a watered-down, secularized version of Buddhism but to defend and renew the religion by recalling the spiritual foundations on which the entire structure was built.

In so doing, Taixu firmly rejected what he considered to be distorted interpretations of the religious tradition by non-Buddhists. While obviously not uncritical of many within his own religious community, the reformer could not permit to go unchallenged the kind of destructively dismissive charges expressed by Confucianist critics such as Liang Shuming (1893–1988). Once a lay devotee himself, Liang asserted that Buddhism's escapist mentality was wholly inappropriate for twentieth-century China and that those who were trying to reform and revive the religion were only taking advantage of difficult times for selfish ends.[31] In his noted 1922 work, *Dong Xi wenhua ji qi zhexue* (Eastern and Western Cultures and Their Philosophies), Liang remarked that he had read some of Taixu's reformist essays in *Haichao yin* and had discussed the matter with the respected classical scholar Zhang Taiyan. Yet Liang's ultimately negative judgment of Buddhism was unequivocal:

> Many Buddhist scholars say that a Buddhist revival can bring relief to present human suffering and can cause China to experience a great peace without disorder. Yet I dare to say to everyone, if there is a revival of Buddhism, then China's disorders will be without end. . . . Confucianism and Buddhism are exact opposites. The former talks about life in the present world and does not discuss things outside of it. The latter only talks about things outside the present world and not life within it. Because of this, Buddhism in our time has no possibility of any great activity [within society], and those who want to encourage such activity have no alternative but to alter the religion's original appearance. So we can remember the article in *Haichao yin* in which the monk Taixu takes as his theme the two vehicles [which ensure rebirth in the world] of humans and devas in order to extend the scope of Buddhism to life in the present world. . . . Yet in summary, Buddhism is basically useless in this world. If in order to make use of it one has to transform Buddhism's basic appearance, then why even waste time on it? I oppose the promotion of Buddhism and I oppose the reformation of Buddhism.[32]

Taixu responded that Liang Shuming, like many others who denounced Buddhism, had simply failed to understand the religion. Moreover, Taixu wrote, although Liang had placed his faith in Confucianism, informed and courageous people actually capable of responding to China's deepening modern crisis "were not being produced through the study of Confucianism but only through the study of Buddhism."[33] What such critics had failed to grasp, he concluded, was the fundamental link in Mahāyāna doctrine between wisdom and compassion—albeit a link not always evident in daily practice. What Liang and others had failed to comprehend was the broad scope of the Dharma and the foundation of moral instruction common to all paths and levels of spiritual attainment.

In formulating his argument, Taixu sought to explain the close relationship between what he termed a "Buddhism for human life" and the meritorious precepts of the Dharma common to the "five vehicles" of Buddhism. These five vehicles *(wu sheng)* can be considered methods, or conveyances, for rebirth among human or divine beings. On the basis of spiritual attainment, one may be reborn in the world of humans, in a pleasurable heavenly realm, among the śrāvakas pursuing arhatship, among the ascetic and self-taught pratyekabuddhas, or among the buddhas and bodhisattvas. According to Taixu, although Buddhism has delineated the Dharma common to the final

three vehicles (i.e., the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva vehicles) as well as the Dharma unique to the final vehicle (i.e., that of the bodhisattvas), all advanced, world-transcending disciplines are grounded in norms or rules that all five vehicles have in common—namely, the noble eightfold path, the five precepts, the ten good deeds, and so forth. Thus these fundamental disciplines are not merely a set of preliminary and possibly dispensable exercises, nor is the practice of the moral precepts only an initial step for beginners along the way.

Indeed, although the practices that lead to supreme enlightenment far exceed in number and scope those common to the five vehicles, they do not transcend the Buddha's basic instructions in the sense of rendering them irrelevant. The foundational precepts of the religion are interconnected with all others and remain at the heart of the path for all bodhisattvas, whether they are accomplished or only just beginning to glimpse the meaning of their great vows. As Taixu put it,

> The reason that common people criticize Buddhism as having nothing to do with human life or ethics is because they know only about the ways of escaping the world according to the Dharma of the three vehicles, and they do not understand the significance of the Mahāyāna teachings and the Dharma common to the five vehicles. Actually basic for Buddhism are the [common] teachings of the five vehicles, which explain human morality and instruct humans how to cultivate good thoughts and actions.[34]

Yinshun wrote about Taixu's approach:

> Feeling the narrowness and poverty of the present decline of Chinese Buddhism, Venerable Master Taixu decided to use the "Dharma common to the Five Vehicles," the "Dharma common to the Three Vehicles," and the "distinctive Dharma of the Great Vehicle" to embrace all Buddhist teachings. . . . [He] gave high praise to the complete Buddhist teachings, namely, that "having merits and virtues, people can be assured of being born as human or heavenly beings; having wisdom, they can become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas. All of these people must rely on all the vinayas, sūtras, and śāstras; if only a part of the teachings are utilized, one cannot attain enlightenment." These complete Buddhist teachings are worthy of being actively proclaimed.
>
> When the Tathāgata explained the Dharma, he always began by teaching the "proper method"—giving, keeping the precepts, and abandoning desire in order to be reborn in heaven (concentration). Then, to those who might be able to renounce the world, he taught a world-transcending doctrine. Because the emphasis of the Buddhist teachings is on transcending the world, those who compiled the sūtras always skipped over the Buddha's "proper method." The ancient Abhidharma texts began with the five precepts, but the later Abhidharma texts eliminated them. . . . [Yet] with regard to this, Venerable Master Taixu, penetrating deeply into the Buddha Vehicle with exceptional insight, revealed the real purpose of the Tathāgata's appearing in this world—to teach people to enter the Buddha-way from human lives. Thus, the method for beginners emphasizes both practicing the ten good deeds (without abandoning the worldly affairs of daily life) and following the right deeds of the Human Vehicle to enter the Buddha Vehicle, instead of emphasizing practices of renunciation such as mindfulness of death.
>
> Using right deeds to move from the Human Vehicle toward the Buddha-way rests on gathering the merits of the Dharma common to the Five Vehicles and the Three Vehicles. . . . According to the complete Buddhist teachings as determined and revealed by Venerable Master Taixu, all these teachings are simply methods for becoming a buddha. This approach not only connects the three levels of the Dharma common to the Five Vehicles, the Dharma common to the Three Vehicles, and the distinctive Dharma of the Great Vehicle, it also connects the teachings belonging to the regular way and the skillful way. This approach reveals the entire sequence of the Buddha-way, and leads one to the supreme buddha realm.[35]

Not only is Buddhism's emphasis on right action in the world so fundamental, Taixu pointed out, but the literature of Mahāyāna Buddhism is replete with heroic descriptions of the bodhisattva's selfless actions on behalf of others. In the *Weimojie suoshuo jing* (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra), for example, one who is a true bodhisattva "views things as impermanent, but does not neglect to cultivate the roots of goodness," "views the world as marked with suffering, but does not

hate to be born and die in it," "sees that there is no permanent ego, but is tireless in instructing others," "sees that there is no birth, yet takes on the form of birth in order to share the burdens of others," "embraces the view of emptiness and nothingness, yet does not discard one's great pity."[36] Of course, this "pity" or "compassion" *(ci)*, Taixu stressed, does not mean "love" *(ai)* as the term is commonly employed in the western religious traditions. "Love" in this sense, he charged, is defined in relation to the erroneous concepts of "self" and "others." Indeed, it can be shown that "loving" actions are intrinsically directed toward benefiting the self, even when their ostensible goal is to help others. In contrast, Taixu wrote,

> From the Buddhist perspective, love comes from the causal interrelationship of all things. Therefore, in keeping with Buddhist principles, it is not called "love" but is referred to as "great compassion." Seeing the suffering of all living beings, in his great compassion the Buddha made up his mind to relieve this suffering. This cannot be compared to the kind of covetous love that arises from promoting oneself. For this reason it is a great compassion that is pure and good and without a trace of evil. This kind of great love is the mother of all the buddhas and the source of all Buddhist truth.[37]

Not understanding the great compassion of a bodhisattva, averred Taixu, Liang Shuming and others have mistakenly concluded that Buddhism has no beneficial function in the modern world. Yet, quite to the contrary, given the extent of human suffering and the potentially disastrous possibilities for evil in the twentieth century and beyond, ours is "the most appropriate age ever for proclaiming the Buddhist Dharma."[38]

In further explicating his use of the innovative term "a Buddhism for human life," Taixu commented that it is necessary to recognize Buddhism's two basic principles for mission: to state the truth and to respond to the needs of sentient beings. "Without the truth," he stated, "Buddhism loses its substance *(ti)*; without responding to need, it loses its function *(yong)*."[39] Practitioners must comprehend both the essence of Buddhist teaching as well as the variety of doctrinal and ritual expressions that have developed as Buddhists have responded to

changing human needs and circumstances. Thus, students of the religion must comprehend the similarities and differences between the kind of anti-Brahmanistic Nikāya Buddhism that developed in India and Southeast Asia and the kind of Mahāyāna Buddhism that flourished in Central and East Asia. In short, Chinese Buddhists must be aware that they are transmitting an ancient and timeless religious message that transcends culture, while simultaneously understanding how their particular culture has affected both various elements of monastic living and the methods and metaphors for communicating the Dharma within schools as different as Tiantai, Chan, Zhenyan, and Pure Land.

According to Taixu, because Buddhists have historically maintained this dual concern for universal truth and human need in different mission contexts, they are uniquely prepared to contribute to the global culture emerging in the twentieth century. The globalization process is creating a synthetic, international culture in which the special characteristics of different peoples are being selectively appropriated according to three interrelated standards: a realistic perspective on human nature, a scientific perspective on truth and falsehood, and a "communitarian" perspective on the social order.[40] A reformed, modern expression of Mahāyāna Buddhism, he declared, stands in a unique relationship to that potential cultural synthesis because it is in fact in harmony with all three.

Moreover, Taixu claimed, a "Buddhism for human life" requires that all religious practices that have to do with gods and ghosts be immediately discontinued. These are superstitious activities incompatible with the highest truths of Mahāyāna. According to popular misconceptions, Buddhism is concerned primarily with death and the travails of souls in hell. Though such a view does recognize that the character of one's life in this world is important—if only because the character of one's afterlife depends on it—in its weighted attention to the dead it disregards the conditions for life in this world and does not penetrate to Mahāyāna's ultimate views about nirvāṇa and saṃsāra. As Taixu explained it,

> So-called death is actually a part of life. Only when we are able to understand life will we be able to understand death. On the contrary, if we

> only understand death, not only will we not understand life, we will not really understand death. Therefore, in view of negative interpretations of Buddhism, we can dispense with the previous inferior practices of the religion as we go about improving actual human life.[41]

Therefore, rather than focusing on rites for the dead, all practitioners should energetically enter upon the bodhisattva's ten periods, or stages, of development *(shi zhu)* and the ten activities required for the universal welfare of others *(shi xing)*.

Taixu knew that it would be difficult to overcome popular misunderstandings of Chinese Buddhism and disassociate the religion itself from the worship of deities and spirits. Hence he believed that four distinct elements would have to converge in the lives of those committed to religious reform:

> First, on the basis of his own life, he knew that *genuine religious conversion experiences* would shatter all superficial perspectives on reality and lead individuals to take up the disciplines of a religious path. These conversion experiences would destroy the illusion of self and others and establish a true basis for community.
>
> Second, integral to and proceeding from these religious experiences, *great vows to engage in compassionate service within the world* were necessary. If Buddhism involved only extraordinary transcendental experiences and sanctioned a withdrawal from society rather than an engagement with it, then the religion could not long survive in a modern society.
>
> Third, Buddhist reform required those who, beyond extraordinary life-changing experiences, had *practical knowledge of how to accomplish things in the everyday world*. What was needed was a practical sense of how to express spiritual insights in concrete ways that transformed both internal and external realities.
>
> Fourth, *courageous moral actions that were appropriate to the uniquely dangerous circumstances of the age* were essential to reform. Thus a sensitivity to current needs—a sense of "Dharmic timing" as it were—was critical to a revitalized religious community.

Taixu judged that because, historically speaking, successfully adaptive religions had manifested all four of these elements to one degree or another, no effective revival of Buddhism in the modern period would be possible without them.[42]

Rejecting both Confucian humanism and all forms of popular religion that venerated gods or ghosts, Taixu sought to outline a style of moral reasoning appropriate for a modern, socially engaged Buddhist. He realized that many religious people relied on the commandments of deities external to the world, judging actions to be right or wrong because they had been either enjoined or forbidden by a divine power. Others adopted a teleological or utilitarian position, maintaining that moral acts are those that produce the best possible consequences or the greatest happiness in each unique situation. Still others preferred to define moral goodness in terms of one's motivation, intention, or disposition. In this last case, noted Taixu, "all human behavior must be judged by the motives in one's mind. So if that person's mind is good, the person is moral, and if the person's mind is evil, the person is immoral."[43]

Yet all these approaches are clearly inadequate, according to Taixu, so that we need to establish a new standard for judging right and wrong. "One-sided theories" are those that base moral goodness either on simple obedience to one's own set of divine commands (which are often in conflict with other people's divine commands) or on merely human calculations about happy consequences or hidden motivations. Both these types of moral reasoning, he asserted, fail to attend to the great principles of the universe. The great principles of cause and effect, which are the primary subject of Buddhist investigation into the nature of things, provide the only sound and unchanging basis for moral judgment. Grounding his sense of "what ought to be" in the most comprehensive understanding of "what is," Taixu directly related sound moral reasoning to a theory of knowledge. Thus, he claimed,

> Human beings should have two sources for knowledge: scientific and religious. Philosophical knowledge is only an extension of these two and is not independent of them. Scientific knowledge is certainly important,

but religious knowledge is also very important. Knowledge established on the basis of science, philosophy, or inferential reasoning is partial. Sense perception is fragmentary, and inferences are not facts. Therefore they do not provide thorough and certain knowledge. . . . What about attaining complete and certain knowledge? I think that only spiritually perfected persons are able to attain it. The kind of knowledge that is gained through spiritual perfection is complete, whole, unequivocal, and verified through personal experience. Those who have this knowledge can thoroughly understand the truth about human life and the cosmos. . . .

The old morality of the past has now lost its basis, so we need to establish new moral standards. . . . Yet providing humankind with new standards for moral behavior cannot be done with one-sided knowledge. If standards for moral behavior are established on the basis of one-sided knowledge, innumerable immoral practices will arise. How, then, can we not rely on one-sided knowledge? Through an enlightenment which takes the entire universe as its object. In other words, the standards for morality must be established on the basis of great natural principles which can apply to the entire universe and all human life. What is in harmony with these great natural principles is good and moral behavior, and what is not in harmony with them is not good and moral behavior. Only thus we can establish moral standards on an unshakable basis.[44]

Taixu then proceeded to specify his own convictions about the most comprehensive and profound knowledge and how insights into it could provide practical guidance for moral decision-making. He concluded:

> According to the Buddhist scriptures, the perfect, great natural principle is the doctrine of cause and effect, the doctrine of the causally produced nature of all things. To explain the truth about human life, we should use the law of causality according to which bitter fruits result from evil actions and pleasing fruits result from good actions. This is profoundly grounded in the nature of the cosmos, as I have explained. All events and things in the universe arise because of the interrelationship between individual and corporate karmic factors and not because of a single factor or a sovereign creator god. Therefore, one-sided theories cannot serve as standards for human moral behavior. This is my conclusion after studying the great principle of causality. Whether as big as the sun and moon or as small as a caterpillar, nothing comes into being except through causality. From this we can see that all things in the world are completely interrelated and nothing exists independently. This is [the meaning of] the universal principle of cause and effect. . . . So with regard to human behavior, there are two conclusions. First, if a person harms another, both persons are harmed. Second, if a person benefits another, both persons benefit. Thus when we consider doing something within society, and we take benefiting others as our primary concern, then this is good and moral. If we take harming others as our primary concern, then this is evil and immoral. The standard for human moral action should be whether it benefits others or not.[45]

Taixu's basic position may be interpreted as a form of ethical naturalism. That is, although he does not maintain that specific rules about "what ought to be done" can be simplistically deduced from descriptive statements about the nature of "what is," he does agree with other ethical naturalists that "normative principles contain descriptive terms."[46] In addition, his argument parallels in some respects Paul Tillich's call for a "theonomous," as opposed to a "heteronomous" or "autonomous," basis for ethical judgments. Like Tillich, Taixu rejects as an adequate ground for moral action both divine commands imposed externally from above (heteronomy) and common human reasoning from mere sense experience (autonomy). Rather, he opts for an ethic based on a profoundly spiritual and transformative insight into the very nature of the universe. In this sense, as in Tillich's position, the ground for ethical judgments is to be glimpsed in the very nature of the cosmos, although at the same time it is to be found within one's own mind. Tillich refers to this as a divine order (theonomy) that transcends a subject-object dichotomy, which requires that individuals either impose their own autonomous will or have one imposed heteronomously upon them. In a parallel way, for Taixu, moral judgments are grounded in a process of codependent becoming that transcends all inadequate subject-object distinctions.[47]

The ideals of right thought and action are two. The first ideal is that of "improving human life" *(rensheng gaishan)* or "improving the world" *(renjian gaishan)*. The reformer constantly spoke of the fundamental precepts of the bodhisattva's path, which provided a basis for beginning to talk imaginatively about the creation of "a pure land in this world" *(renjian jingtu)*. The second ideal is that of "becoming a buddha" *(cheng fo)*. Taixu frequently declared that despite the weight of one's karmic past, "every person has the possibility of becoming a Buddha."[48] Everyone can turn and follow in the footsteps of Śākyamuni. Every person can realize his or her buddha-nature by engagement with the Enlightened One's four most important tasks: defeating the "demons" that distract us from the right path *(jiang mo)*, attaining the perfect knowledge of a buddha *(chengdeng zhengjue)*, turning the wheel of Dharma by teaching others the truth *(zhuan falun)*, and saving others by ferrying them over from the state of suffering to the state of enlightenment *(du zhongsheng)*.[49] In a 1939 address, Taixu explicitly linked the ideal of becoming a buddha to China's republican revolution and the ongoing war of resistance against Japan:

> Śākyamuni's conquering Māra and all the fundamental illusions and passions was the beginning of his becoming a Buddha, and thus of the world having the precious jewel of a Buddha. By preaching he turned the wheel of the Law, which was the beginning of the world having the precious jewel of the Dharma. His efforts to save others led persons to become bhikṣus, arhats, and bodhisattvas, and thus was the beginning of the world having the precious jewel that is the sangha. Through the establishment of these three jewels, there began to be Buddhism in the world. Having Buddhism, the world then could enjoy the light that illumined the whole cosmos. Therefore his conquering the illusions and passions was the most important stage in becoming a Buddha and saving the world. . . .
>
> The so-called conquering of illusions and passions destroys all the dark things that disturb and obstruct, just like a revolution must first destroy the evil power of all bad systems and customs. From this we can see that the meaning of becoming a Buddha to save the world very much corresponds to that of a revolution to save a country. The original goal of a revolution is to establish something new. But first it must start by destroying things. Because formerly China's political power was held either [by emperors] according to the traditional autocratic system or by competing warlords who segmented the country, the government was not able to respond to needs and concentrate its strength to achieve the aims of defending the country and protecting the people. . . . In recent years imperialistic acts of unfair restraint and oppression against our country have reached a most serious stage, a most critical point, just like when the Buddha Śākyamuni vowed under the Bo tree, "If I do not become a Buddha, may I not arise from this seat," because the vow caused Māra to become afraid and jealous. So Māra manifested all kinds of demonic powers in order to disturb and harm the Buddha. Māra took all things dark, unenlightened, and disturbing to be his life. So if the Buddha did not conquer these demons then he could not become a Buddha, but on the contrary would forever remain under Māra's control. Now China is faced with this kind of situation. So if we are not able to engage in a war of resistance [against Japan] in order finally to prevail, then we will not be able to establish the country, but to the contrary become those vanquished by our enemies.[50]

As Taixu had suggested earlier, in his lengthy essay entitled "Ziyou shiguan" (A Historical Perspective on Freedom), the path toward becoming a buddha, toward becoming truly free from all the "demons" that bind and afflict humankind, involves tearing down and rebuilding the faulty mental structures and harmful social structures that frame human experience. These two kinds of structures are interrelated. Liberation requires becoming enlightened to the transformative implications of the doctrine of no-self and, on that basis, becoming engaged in the practical struggle for just and compassionate social, educational, economic, and political structures in society.[51] According to Taixu, Buddhists cannot effectively pursue spiritual wisdom without engaging in the daily quest to establish a pure land in this world. Hence he sought to inspire his followers with an expansive new idealism and utopianism, while simultaneously calling for a new Buddhist realism *(xianshi zhuyi)* and pragmatism in solving the world's problems.

POLITICAL REALISM

As Welch has appropriately commented, "probably the closest thing to a 'political monk' during the Republican era was Taixu."[52] The reformer acknowledged in his autobiography that as a young man his basic sympathies were with the Chinese anarchists. He maintained that anarchism and Buddhism were very close in political perspective, although he came to believe that the country could best make progress toward anarchism through a form of "democratic socialism."[53] He claimed that socialism and Buddhism similarly advocated human equality and social welfare, and he was impressed with the principle that people ought to contribute to society according to their abilities and receive according to their needs.

Early in his career, Taixu embraced the hope that socialists could eliminate monopolies controlled by wealthy capitalists, whose insensitive power and greed continued to cause such hardship for the peasants and urban working class. Yet by the mid-1920s, Taixu began to express a more moderate socio-economic perspective. He moved more toward the political center, distancing himself from those in the Communist Party and developing relationships with important Guomindang officials. As Welch observes:

> Perhaps because he had his fingers burned by encouraging radicalism among his students, or perhaps because he felt that the prestige for Buddhism could best be won by supporting the central government, or perhaps simply because he was getting older, Taixu became politically more conservative. In 1924 he wrote an article entitled "A Warning about the Communist Party," in which he said that the latter ought to be called "the party of killing and destruction, not the party of common property" (which is what its name means in Chinese).[54]

Taixu's moderating political views appear to be related to his evolving judgments about proper strategies for change. It might be said that the monk finally chose to situate himself somewhat right of center on the political spectrum, between the Guomindang on the right and the Communists on the left. The fundamental issues that he had to weigh carefully were the role of social conflict and whether, within the context of his "Buddhism for human life," the most effective strategies for ultimate transformation ought to be designed narrowly, for the individual citizen, or more broadly, to include the socio-political structures in which all persons found themselves.

As Arif Dirlik maintains, the Guomindang's perspective on change was quintessentially expressed in Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement (Xin shenghuo yundong). Initiated in 1934, the movement was based on the view that the salvation of the country could be attained most directly through hygienic and behavioral reform of the individual. Chiang's two most important goals for the Chinese populace were personal "cleanliness" *(qingjie)* and "discipline" *(guiju)*, both of which were intended to connote a certain measure of militarization of the citizenry. In response to widespread criticism that the New Life Movement was too conservative and narrowly conceived, leaders of the Guomindang claimed that the program aimed to alter the very basis of social behavior. Chiang himself asserted, for example:

> In order to become a healthy modern *(xiandai)* citizen, it is necessary first to have a strong and robust body; having a strong body, [one] then has a strong spirit; having a strong spirit, [one] can then acquire all the abilities to strengthen the nation; having all kinds of abilities to strengthen the nation, [one] can naturally defend the state and glorify the nation, help our state and nation to forever accord with the world and not again suffer from the aggression and oppression of foreign countries or receive disdain and insults.[55]

According to Dirlik, this conservative political philosophy developed primarily out of an abhorrence of social conflict. Because such conflict was traditionally judged to be the result of moral decline, the Guomindang denied it any important role in social change.

In contrast to this conservative position, the Communist Party took a much broader view. As Dirlik remarks,

> Communist policies were based on the premise that class struggle—or, in a more generalized sense, social conflict—was the motive force of social change, and social transformation the foundation of political change. . . . The dominant Communist view embodied in Mao Zedong's thought has conceived the relationship between individual improvement and social change as a dialectical one, with changes in one depen-

dent upon—and, in their turn, determinative of—changes in the other, a conception consistent with the Marxist view of man as "the ensemble of social relations." . . . Whatever the conditions of rural mobilization and the occasional changes in Communist tactics, it is evident that it was their sustained ability to improve the people's livelihood, as well as their involvement of the people in social change, that was to a great extent responsible for the hold they came to have over the population. The people, mobilized in the revolutionary transformation of their own lives, were much more responsive to Communist guidance, even in the cause of "cleanliness" and "discipline," than they ever were to the Guomindang.[56]

Taixu's early associations with anarchists and revolutionaries who wanted to overthrow the Manchu dynasty led him, as a young man, to see the importance of institutional and structural change. He spoke freely about the need for racial, governmental, economic, and religious forms of "revolution" *(geming)*. He once remarked, "Even the idea of revolution growing out of love for the people . . . is in harmony with Buddhism. . . . In the process of a revolution there is always a phase of destruction preceding reconstruction."[57] Both his active support of the 1911 anti-Qing revolution and his involvement with the so-called invasion of Jin Shan reveal his implicit understanding that a certain amount of conflict and suffering would be necessary in the transformation of society and sangha.

Yet as he matured and confronted the actual consequences of division and violence, Taixu could not ultimately justify systematic class conflict as a means to an end. As a Buddhist, his understanding of moral intentionality was integrally linked to certain normative modes of action within his tradition that would not comfortably permit him to adopt Mao's communism. In the final analysis, then, without abandoning his basic affirmation that individual development and social progress were dialectically related, as the socialists and communists maintained, he adopted a position much more in consonance with the Guomindang than with the Communist Party.

As a result, Taixu spoke expansively about the harmony between Buddhism and Sun Yat-sen's "three principles of the people" *(sanmin zhuyi)*, even stating in one article that "Buddhism is the ultimate goal of Sanminism and Sanminism is Buddhism put into practice."[58] He wrote favorably about the concern of Chiang Kai-shek's New Life Movement for propriety *(li)*, justice *(yi)*, honesty *(lian)*, and sense of shame *(chi)*.[59] He occasionally quoted Sun and Chiang, stood proudly at the side of the generalissimo for a photograph in 1928, traveled abroad twice as a goodwill ambassador of the Nationalist government, and accepted state subsidies for the operation of his seminary near Chongqing.[60] Some people even came to think that he was secretly a member of the Guomindang, although the suggestion was always denied by those closest to him.

Taixu wanted all his followers, monastic and lay, to be knowledgeable about current political issues and events and active in addressing social problems, despite the fact that most monks during the Republican period remained totally uninvolved in such "worldly" affairs. In fact, as Prip-Møller's research in Republican China has documented, a number of Buddhist monasteries at the time even prohibited monks from discussing politics, posting signs that read, "Whoever delights in talking politics and whose heart is bent on secular matters will not be allowed to live in the monastery."[61] Nevertheless, Taixu urged his followers to adopt a realistic perspective on politics, aware that one of the most critical general concerns of humankind was finding "the most reasonable and perfect form of politics."[62]

Taixu maintained that the traditional Buddhist ideal of an enlightened ruler *(cakravartin)* provided a parallel both to the ancient western concept of a philosopher-king, as recommended by Plato, and the ancient Chinese concept of a sage-king. Thus those rulers who gained insight into the absolute emptiness and interdependence of all things would doubtless exceed all others in governing with wisdom and compassion. Accordingly, they could advance human rights and freedoms like those enjoyed in Europe and America while preventing what had resulted from such freedoms within the western context—namely, an unceasing competition between individuals that appeared to promote equality but that actually encouraged inequality, economic classism, and imperialistic colonialism. Explaining the origins of

socialism, Taixu argued that it had developed in reaction to the excesses of western individualism:

> Socialism opposed democracies because, although democracies claimed that all persons were free and equal, all were by no means free and equal. Only a minority of persons was free; the majority was not free. It reacted against the fact that [in democracies] all economic resources were enjoyed by and controlled by only a few people, as it also reacted against the politics of traditional nationalism. Thus socialism was formed. This kind of socialism is something that many individuals organize as a group, so that in such groups all kinds of benefits can be shared and help the majority of the people.[63]

Although Taixu was greatly influenced by socialist perspectives in formulating his judgments about forms of western democratic capitalism, and believed that socialist analyses of the reasons for conflict between the bourgeoisie and proletariat were largely correct, he was not a naive promoter of socialism but was alert to different expressions of socialism and to the contrasts between collectivism *(jichan zhuyi)* and communism *(gongchan zhuyi)*. Thus he recognized the positive religio-philosophical impulses that contributed to the rise of socialism while rejecting both Marx's economic determinism and its reductionistic views of religion. He also acknowledged the lively debate between those who believed in the activist role of the central government and those anarchists who wanted to get rid of it. Above all, Taixu wanted to distinguish between socialists who were advocates of gradual, peaceful reform and those who were proponents of rapid change through violent revolution. Although he appreciated the socialists' aims and thought them to have much in common with those of Buddhist modernists, eventually he judged them to be seriously flawed. He wrote in 1935:

> With regard to the errors of socialist means, we can enumerate four: (1) socialists consider the external environment and forget about individual persons. What they emphasize is entirely the reconstruction of the environment, the restructuring of society, but not the reforming of the mind and body through personal moral cultivation. There is an ancient saying, "From the Son of Heaven to the commoner, all must take the cultivation of the self as the essential task." If the self is not cultivated, then the family will not be orderly, the country will not be [properly] governed, and the society will not be just. (2) They focus strictly on property and neglect morality. They think that bad environments result from property inequities, so they only try to alter the property system without realizing that economic classes also result from changes and developments in psychological states and desires. (3) They seek to correct the present consequences of previous actions while ignoring the root causes. The various classes that humans have created are also all the consequences of previous deeds. Because the original actions were different, the karmic consequences are different. So if they think that they can merely remove the consequences, such as despots and capitalists, without realizing the need to improve the root causes, then while their aim is certainly a good one, they can only get rid of evil results but they cannot sow good seeds. Thus in the twinkling of an eye the warlords become dictators and the criminals, tyrants. This is tantamount to changing merely the form but not the substance. This doesn't help anything! (4) They try to eliminate individual property but allow a person's grasping for such to continue. They eliminate all classes and nationalize all property, so that people forget the boundaries that delineate the things that belong to the self. The intention of communism is for everyone to attain what they each privately desire, but their grasping desires only become more intense. Since individual property comes from grasping for things, how can the possessing of things be forgotten if the self's grasping is not eliminated? And as a result, people become lazy and do not like to work hard. They only want to obtain things without making an effort. Many kinds of industries, therefore, will not be productive, and the whole situation will ultimately return to its previous state.[64]

In the 1920s, Taixu had expressed the fear that the most pressing danger in the twentieth century was the possible conflagration of societies in class warfare. The danger was not so much that the rich and powerful would continue to dominate and oppress the poor, but that the poor would rise up violently to overthrow the rich. Hence he urged the poor not to follow the incitement of revolutionaries who could possibly destroy evil but who could not establish the good, who could kill but not thereby give life to a more perfect way. In a

parallel manner, he sharply warned the privileged classes in China and around the globe:

> From now on, the world's most dangerous issue will not be the tyranny and struggle for hegemony by those who constitute the powerful class internationally. It will be the fact that those who are weak will unite to seek revenge on those who are powerful. The danger will not lie in the monopolies and competitions of the capitalist class, but in the united struggle of resistance by the poor against the capitalist class. In fact, this kind of situation is already happening! Throughout the world the weak and the poor already are becoming out of control like a raging fire or blaze on the prairie, or like a tiger or rhinoceros breaking free from its cage. The powerful class and the capitalist class are already facing their total collapse, being surrounded on all four sides [by the weak and the poor]. So as I have said before, only Buddhism can save us in this dangerous crisis.[65]

The reformer argued that if Buddhists were to help heal the wounds of a divided global society and prevent the uncontrolled violence that was certain to erupt, then even members of the sangha had to become active in political affairs. After World War II, some of his monastic and lay supporters hoped that Taixu would go even farther and endorse the formation of a Buddhist political party to increase the religion's influence on public policy. The monk acknowledged that he had seriously considered the possibility and was "slow to decide."[66] He knew that in Burma many monks had participated in political activities and had even joined in the military resistance against the invading Japanese. He recognized that in Sri Lanka the sangha was split over the decision by some of its members to form a Buddhist political party, while in Tibet certain lamas even served as local government officials.

Taixu realized that there were real advantages as well as disadvantages to political participation and organization in China, especially for the monastic community. One the one hand, if monks and nuns considered their life and work to be completely beyond politics, they could easily find themselves ignored or, even worse, persecuted, and their institutional properties appropriated by unfriendly governments.

On the other hand, if they became too directly involved in politics, they could quickly find their independence compromised by such associations and, as a result, public respect for their religious leadership diminished.

The best course, Taixu judged, was to encourage participation in political activities for both lay and monastic followers while simultaneously discouraging monks and nuns from serving in any elective office or in the formation of any specifically Buddhist political party. He thus affirmed not only the constitutional right but the responsibility of every Buddhist, including members of the sangha, to listen to the concerns of the people, study public policy issues, and seek practical solutions for the benefit of all sentient beings. Yet he also dissuaded monks and nuns from pursuing political careers in which they could be called upon to exercise power over others, be feared or envied because of the authority of their office, and lose time and opportunity for important religious duties. By rejecting the idea of a specifically Buddhist political party, he also avoided making party affiliation a divisive religious issue. As he wrote,

> Lay Buddhists can participate as much as they wish in various political parties and associations, or they can organize political parties using other names, but they must not use the name of Buddhism in order to organize a political party.
>
> Again, some Buddhists are members of the Guomindang, the Youth Party, the Democratic Socialist Party, the Democratic League, or even of the Communist Party. Even more Buddhists are not members of any political party or association. Since they have already decided to join certain parties or associations, or not to join one, were we to organize a Buddhist Party we could not ask them to change their affiliation and join the Buddhist Party. And if the Buddhist Party were to become yet another independent party, then we would alienate ourselves from them. My friends who study Buddhism and lay Buddhists are members of different parties and associations, or they have chosen not to join such groups. Through philosophical, literary, cultural, educational, charitable, and other activities, I have friendly relations with members of every religion, and with nonreligious people as well. If I were to lead a

> Buddhist political party, then on the contrary all these ties would be reduced. Therefore Buddhism does not want to organize a political party.[67]

ENVISIONING A LASTING PEACE

Although Taixu had always been known within the Buddhist community for his modernist perspectives on social activism, after the 1937 Japanese invasion that initiated the long Chinese nightmare of World War II, he was increasingly outspoken on specific social and political issues. From the vantage point of the Dharma, he sought both to critique the destructive forces that he saw at work in the world and to envision a more equitable and peaceful world. In a significant 1943 essay entitled "Lianheguo zhansheng hou zhi pinghe shijie" (A Peaceful World After the Allied Victory), the Buddhist master outlined a number of his assessments of the world's situation and concrete proposals for the post-war era. It was his position that no expedient compromises could be forged with the Axis powers in order to end the war. All people should realize, he asserted, that the Axis countries' aggression was based on three wholly unacceptable principles: "first, militarism; second, racism; and third, a cruelly autocratic and superstitious form of heroism."[68] Therefore, anything less than total surrender on their part would be nothing but a temporary armistice that would be followed by further fighting as the struggle for true freedom from their tyranny continued. Confident in the ultimate victory of the Allied forces, he thought it important to describe the conditions necessary for a lasting peace marked by the "absolute equality" of all nations and the universal will of all peoples to live in harmony.

The key to that future, he asserted, will always reside within human minds—that is, within peaceful minds that generate peaceful lives. According to Taixu, the human mind can, in fact, be linked to four basic kinds of ambition *(xinzhi)* that determine moral behavior. The first and most prevalent kind of ambition is to benefit oneself and one's family; the second most prevalent is to serve one's national or ethnic group; the third is to benefit all humankind; and the fourth

is to save all sentient beings in the universe. Given the complexity of human personality, most people's thoughts and actions at any given moment are expressive of more than a single ambition. However, the far-reaching fourth ambition, Taixu asserted, is distinctly that of the bodhisattva of Mahāyāna scripture and tradition. As a spiritual ideal, it motivates far too few in this world and should be considered the supreme ambition that remains for virtually all human beings a future goal.

More immediately or pragmatically, however, the first three kinds of ambition must be reprioritized in reverse order. The benefits of all humankind must come before nation, family, and self. Only when individuals, families, and nations are willing to sacrifice their own interests for those of the whole human community will the cornerstones for a lasting peace be put into place. Thus the new mandate for every Buddhist must become, in a real sense, "to break his relations with not only his family but also with his country . . . [in order to] look upon the people of the world in the same brotherly spirit."[69] The reformer remarked:

> Some will ask: Since you de-emphasize the benefits of national and ethnic groups, is not your position close to the internationalism of the Communist Party? This is definitely not the case. We should realize that the Communist Party's proletarian class internationalism is based on division and struggle, but the good of all humankind is based on peace and harmony. The good of all humankind includes the good of all nations and ethnic groups. So certainly we can accommodate the full development of that which benefits national and ethnic groups while not undermining the establishment of a long-lasting peaceful world in which all persons benefit.[70]

Taixu thought that the global society of the post-war era would require appropriate educational, economic, and governmental structures to maintain a lasting peace. With regard to education, the Buddhist master argued that its scope was universally too narrow. In every country the primary aim of educators was merely to prepare individuals for productive work within the economic, political, and military organizations of their state. A new perspective on education had

to be developed to encompass the more expansive goal of preparing people to become global citizens and contribute to a harmonious global culture. For this, a holistic form of education was needed that would lead both children and adults toward a richer, modern vision of the complementarity and interdependence of all peoples.

Though present-day colleges and universities might claim to provide "higher" education, Taixu observed, it is clearly not the "highest" education concerned with moral culture. Hence what is needed at the post-secondary level is a new "international" or "global" university, established jointly by leaders from all nations and with branch campuses throughout the world. "What we need," Taixu remarked, "is an institution where great souls are trained":

> The mission of this university and its branches will be to form a new world culture out of the different cultures, to eliminate all differences and prejudices, to bring about the free flow and assimilation of cultures and to lay a cultural foundation for peace. . . . Universal equality, freedom, justice and love must be taught to the future generations. Furthermore, the field of human activities must be expanded to reach out to the entire universe, to all spheres of nature. Through such broadened education a healthy body and healthy soul will be established in every individual. Man will become a harmonious part of nature. Instead of limiting his sphere of activities to his immediate surroundings his outlook will be the universe and heaven and become truly a part of the trinity of heaven, earth and man.[71]

With regard to economics, Taixu advocated free trade and economic cooperation. "Free trading and equal access to raw materials and markets," he wrote, "must exist in the peaceful world to come."[72] Large countries and small must respect one another as equals and work together for economic progress and improved living standards for all peoples. Unbridled capitalism must be recognized as the destructive force that it is, he asserted, as most world leaders, including the U.S. President Roosevelt, had already come to admit. Large companies that irresponsibly manipulate national and international markets for their own gain must be regulated in order to encourage economic forces that benefit all levels of society. "Capitalism and the profit system must go," Taixu flatly asserted. "All economic activities must be undertaken with national and universal welfare in mind. Production and consumption must be planned and controlled. There should be no deficiency and no waste."[73]

Four additional economic principles were important for the postwar era. First, said the Buddhist reformer, rich countries should help poor countries; developed nations should grant assistance to underdeveloped nations. Taixu realized that there were significant differences in economic status between the industrialized and the nonindustrialized world. Therefore he commended especially the United States for taking the lead in offering financial assistance for developing nations.

Second, after the defeat of Germany and Japan, along with their allies, economic aid should be granted to them for reconstruction and rehabilitation and no war reparations demanded.

Third, immigration policies should be liberalized. To promote economic efficiency and productivity, both immigration within the national borders of large countries like China, as well as international immigration, should be encouraged, especially to undeveloped countries in Africa and South America. Likewise, all forms of discrimination against immigrants should be ended.

Fourth, monetary policies should be strictly monitored. Government restraints should seek to stabilize prices and prevent the chaos often caused by rapid inflation.

With regard to global politics, Taixu was optimistic that the world was moving toward a universal democracy. Nevertheless, he declared, "With regard to each nation's internal political system, of course it remains a principle that the people should decide the issue by themselves. There is no need to force democracy on people, for sooner or later gradual progress can be made in enlightening them."[74] This modernizing process of political "enlightenment," as Taixu described it, involves the awakening of all nations to the desirability of both democratic freedoms and a centralized form of "global government."

With regard to a democratic form of government, the nations who had less experience with democracy, including China and the Soviet Union, would learn from those who had more experience. Thereby rapid progress could be made toward defining universal

rights and obligations. Colonies would necessarily be given their independence, because all forms of colonial oppression and imperialism were obvious impediments to lasting peace. Taixu called on Great Britain in particular to set an example in this.

With respect to an international form of government, the Buddhist master believed that an impetus for political unification in the post-war period would surely emerge from the close cooperation between China, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. The signs of movement toward political unification would be a viable "world court," a respected "world congress," and a unified military force. The Permanent Court of International Justice (also popularly called the "World Court"), which sat at The Hague, had ceased to function, for all intents and purposes, after the German occupation of the Netherlands in 1940. Moreover, the operations of the ineffectual League of Nations in Geneva were virtually dead. Nevertheless, Taixu saw in both institutions foundational steps to the future. He envisioned a new court with real powers to settle disputes and protect the rights of the poor and the weak. And he called for a new international organization with proportional representation to foster cooperation and peace among all peoples. "Within three to six months after the end of the war," he stated, "a 'World Congress' (Shijie daibiao dahui) must be formed. Germany, Italy, and the other Axis powers must join this representative organization within one to three years."[75]

With regard to a military, he called for strict arms controls and the creation of a single international force, stating:

> It [the World Congress] should control the military forces of all the nations and have the power of military sanction against aggressor states and those who should refuse to submit to the justice of the Congress. Its military strength should be formed by taking over arms belonging to the defeated Axis nations and those of the Allies. In addition, no nation should be allowed to manufacture arms for its own use in the future. The Commander-in-Chief of the Congress Armed Forces should be appointed by rotation from China, the United States, Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., and five other neutrals to avoid the abusive power by any nation or individual.[76]

Beyond all his specific educational, economic, and political proposals for the creation of new international programs and institutions in the post-war era was Taixu's overarching call for the nurturing of a truly "moral culture" *(daode wenhua)*. To achieve a lasting peace, what the world needed most fundamentally was a sweeping spiritual transformation, a universal change within the human heart that would alter the very fabric of social interaction and political engagement. In the present world, Taixu observed, "parties are formed for the defense of common interests, so that the whole world may be said to be composed of coalitions of all sorts, which are always on the alert, and whose object it is to use every possible means to suppress their rivals."[77]

However, according to Taixu, democracy must finally yield more than the protected right of individuals and coalitions to participate in power struggles for their own benefit. From the Buddhist perspective, such a limited understanding of democratic goals would guarantee only the continuation of a destructive individualism while ignoring "the link that unites our lives with that of every living being."[78] Ultimately, he claimed, each person has to see clearly that "all human egos are bound together by bonds of sympathy, and each of them radiates a subtle influence which reaches all those who can respond to it."[79] Accordingly, as C. Yates McDaniel observed in 1935, Taixu and other Chinese Buddhist modernists argued, in essence, that because all sentient beings manifest buddha-nature, "democracy is government based upon compassion and love, and the recognition that one is the servant of all."[80] For Taixu, the acceptance of servanthood was the defining task of the bodhisattva's way.

CHAPTER 5

A CREATIVE RECOVERY OF TRADITION

The central spiritual paradigms of any religious tradition can be understood to address the existential situation of the majority of individual people who are perceived to form its holy community. The Confucian scholars of classical China, for example, understood their community, in the midst of disorder, to be on the way—via the rectification of names and the extension of virtue—to an all-embracing experience of the unity of heaven, earth, and humankind. This was the attainment of the rare yet paradigmatic *junzi*—the "superior man" (James Legge), the "gentleman" (Arthur Waley), or the "profound person" (Tu Wei-ming).[1] According to the metaphysics of the early Confucians, the universe was a thoroughly moral one. Each person possessed both an "evaluating mind" capable of discovering the inherent order of the cosmos and an ability to emulate exemplary behavioral models.[2] Indeed, argues Hu Shi, the basic logic of Confucianism began with the attempt to discover, through the study of names, what things ought to be and do.[3] Discovery was the key to the regulation of the social and political order by means of an elaborate system of relational ideals *(li)* attributed to an absolute and a priori origin.[4]

Mahāyāna Buddhism, in contrast, presented the Chinese with a spiritual path toward a wordless wisdom that was beyond all names and forms and the suffering associated with them. Such was the

attainment of the paradigmatic bodhisattva. In view of Buddhism's radically different understanding of reality and philosophy of language, early Chinese masters such as Daoan (312–385) and Sengzhao (374–414) saw the necessity of directly attacking the Confucian claim that "names correspond to things." Accordingly, moral development was presented not as progressive discrimination but as progressive forgetting *(jian wang)*. Bodhisattvas were worthy of praise precisely because, having "forgotten" all names and forms as sources of binding attachment, they were freed to act compassionately within the world. Having defeated the temptations of the great deceiver, Māra, to grasp for names and forms, and having been shaken by the transformative truth that "form is emptiness and emptiness form," bodhisattvas were freed to become friends of all sentient beings, refuges for all those who suffer.[5]

The Confucian *junzi*, therefore, was one who practiced a comprehensive discrimination based on a linguistic coding of cosmic order. A classical emphasis within the tradition was on ethico-religious cartography via lexicography. To employ Jonathan Smith's terminology, the typical Confucianist was engaged in a "locative" project, locating and attuning all aspects of the human microcosm in relation to the heavenly macrocosm—a project that the *junzi* had successfully completed.[6] The career of a bodhisattva presented the Chinese with a sharply contrasting spiritual trajectory, for in Buddhism it was the evil Māra who enticingly offered the linguistic code as an actual map of reality. Therefore, the Buddhist masters sought to recontextualize human existence by reference to a nondual realm, or dimension of experience, that was beyond language and ordinary categories of understanding but that, once discovered by the bodhisattva, provided both release from and meaning for life within this world of time and space.

Moreover, because Chinese Buddhists generally believed that all beings were endowed with "intrinsic enlightenment" or an original "buddha-nature," the arousal of the thought of enlightenment *(bodhicitta)*—the decisive conversion experience that was held to initiate the bodhisattva's spiritual journey—was understood to be, potentially, only a breath away. Most Buddhists in China assumed that in the

karmic past of any new bodhisattva, there was a point at which some enlightened figure had planted a seed of truth that took root in a virtuous disposition *(gotra)*. Subsequently, "after many lifetimes, thanks to the infused grace of the various teacher-saviors and the merit earned by responding to them, a person becomes able to put forth the *bodhicitta*."[7] Surprisingly "graced" in this manner, new bodhisattvas proceed to consolidate their *bodhicitta,* take their public vows of compassionate service, and advance along the path of enlightenment while working for the welfare of all living beings.

Taixu's own portraits of the bodhisattva path were not strikingly original or controversial. Nevertheless, they may be said to constitute a creative recovery of tradition that reveals his particular form of piety, for in defining the bodhisattva's path of action, the reformer sought to recover and underscore the elements of his tradition that were especially relevant for a socially engaged "Buddhism for human life"—elements that were often neglected in contemporary China. He aimed thereby to inspire self-confidence in common bodhisattvas, urging them to dream great dreams about what they could accomplish in the world. He wanted to remind them of the precepts and perfections, and to encourage them to think creatively about establishing a pure land on earth. He hoped to reshape the community of monastic bodhisattvas to teach and model the Dharma more effectively. And he sought to offer a compelling apologetic for his understanding of a modern form of Buddhism, in light of sharp criticism from both inside and outside of the Chinese sangha.

ILLUMINATING THE TRUE WAY

Jan Yün-hua has observed not only that the idea of the bodhisattva was one of the most important and popular themes in Chinese Buddhist literature, but also that these great beings were presented through a threefold typology that "introduced a new image of the religious founder through past lives of the Buddha; it provided a spiritual map to man, and indicated that the religious goal was attainable through cultivation; [and] it brought to the Chinese masses a warm, compassionate and powerful personal deity."[8] Thus, (1) through the Jātaka tales of Gautama's previous lives, Buddhism presented an image of religious and moral leadership far more expansive and imaginative than that of the ancient sage-kings of China; (2) it introduced the striking idea of the achievability of the religious goal through individual cultivation; and (3) it offered the hope of salvation through the skill and power of compassionate deities—namely, the celestial or "phantasma bodhisattvas," as Lancaster has referred to them.[9]

Two controversial issues about this threefold typology are significant for understanding Taixu's presentation of the bodhisattva path. First, although all Buddhists acknowledged that the bodhisattva's career is a long one of practicing the perfections *(pāramitā)* through numerous stages *(bhūmi)* of prescribed spiritual development, questions arose about how applicable this path was to normal human beings.[10] The historic debate concerned the extent to which a typical follower should interpret the *inspirational* bodhisattva career of the Enlightened One as an *aspirational* model. On the one hand, there is little in the Jātaka tales to suggest that Gautama's unique path of spiritual virtuosity constitutes a practical ideal to be embraced by the entire community, little encouragement to imagine that everyone should aspire to such an illustrious and noble religious career. Accordingly, most teachers of the Theravāda tradition have continued to interpret the Jātaka tales as inspirational reading—that is, as literature that reminds adherents of the extraordinary wisdom and compassion displayed through many lifetimes by the solitary buddha of this age.

In the Mahāyāna tradition, on the other hand, the bodhisattva path that Gautama trod so tirelessly is portrayed as a universal ideal. Members of the Mahāyāna community are meant not only to be inspired by the Buddha's glorious career, but to aspire to become like him in the realization of their own buddha-nature as well. This is directly related, of course, to the community's self-definition; the "Great Vehicle" (Skt. Mahāyāna) is synonymous with the careers of bodhisattvas. As Peter Gregory has noted, Chinese Buddhists generally followed the presentation in *The Lotus Sūtra* that defines śrāvakas as those disciples who attained liberation through contemplation of the Four Noble Truths, and pratyekabuddhas as those who achieved

release by penetrating the truth of conditioned origination (Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda;* Ch. *yuanqi*). Yet these two vehicles lead to an arhatship that is markedly inferior to the goal of the bodhisattva path. That goal, which the *Lotus* assures disciples that they will ultimately attain, is nothing less than supreme buddhahood.[11]

The presentation of the religious community's central paradigm, therefore, primarily addresses those new bodhisattvas struggling to remain faithful to the enlightened life that they have only recently understood to be a real possibility for them personally. Thus the bodhisattva ideal appeals to those persons who, inspired by the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, aspire to attain the selfless, transcendental path on which those great beings course.

In affirming the applicability of the bodhisattva path for all people, Taixu distinguished sharply between the perspective of the Nikāya schools and that of Mahāyāna tradition. The Chinese reformer observed that the paths of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas are full of pitfalls and not fully in consonance with the absolute selflessness that Śākyamuni realized. Their limited goal of self-enlightenment is not the highest goal to which all Buddhists should aspire. He remarked:

> Mahāyāna followers seek self-enlightenment in order to awaken others, so that all might together realize eternal truth. Nikāya Buddhism is like a single wheeled cart; Mahāyāna is like a train or a steamship in which everyone can sit together. Nikāya Buddhism lacks vows of compassion, whereas Mahāyāna's compassionate vows are profound. In other words, the difference between Mahāyāna and Nikāya Buddhism is essentially that between manifesting the bodhi-mind and an unwillingness to manifest it.[12]

Second, in addition to this basic distinction between Nikāya and Mahāyāna Buddhism, Taixu emphasized one particular response to the bodhisattva ideal within the Mahāyāna community itself. As Luis Gómez has remarked, in Mahāyāna there is a natural tension "between the notion of Bodhisattvas as supernatural beings on the one hand, and on the other hand Bodhisattvas as human ideals: 'Bodhisattva' as a state of perfection attainable by real human beings, and 'Bodhisattvas' as a name for immanent or potential enlightenment inherent to

conscious life. This tension is part of the dynamics of the myth, and does not imply that only one of the alternatives must be the orthodox or 'true' definition of 'Bodhisattva.'"[13] Accordingly, Sangharakshita has stated, Mahāyāna masters have historically differentiated two basic religious responses of the heart:

> The first, which may be termed the active or masculine response, consists in determining to become a Bodhisattva oneself and to take part in the great work of universal emancipation. The second, the passive or feminine response, consists in resolving to have complete faith in the power of the Bodhisattva's vow and to allow oneself to be saved by him. These two responses or reactions of the devotee when confronted by the Bodhisattva Ideal form the psychological basis of what Nāgārjuna terms the "difficult path" and the "easy path."... In the Mahāyāna the distinction is between the Bodhisattva (or Bodhisattvas: the Ideal is singular only in the abstract) who out of compassion vows to establish a Pure Land and liberate all beings, and those who by virtue of their faith in him are reborn into that Pure Land.[14]

The *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās* (Fundamentals of the Middle Way) and other important works of the renowned Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (c. 150–250) were rooted in the analytic concerns of the Abhidharma literature and the wisdom perspectives of the Prajñāpāramitā texts. However, through a dialectic of oppositions intended to highlight the absolute emptiness of all things *(śūnyatā),* they provided legitimacy for both these religious responses: the "difficult" path of self-reliance, and the "easy" path of dependence. In the late Qing and Republican periods in China, most monks and nuns became familiar with both paths and examined their own personalities and capabilities in relation to these two forms, or expressions, of piety. Moreover, most masters were supportive of the dual practice of Chan and Pure Land and judged the two to be complementary.[15] According to Chün-fang Yü, this was even true of the Pure Land master Yinguang, who was largely responsible for the revival of Buddhist devotionalism in the period.[16]

Despite the fact that Taixu occasionally sanctioned such dual practice to attract the masses, as has been noted, the growing popularity

of Pure Land devotionalism concerned him. Kenneth Ch'en has stated that "of the four million or so lay devotees of Buddhism in China during the 1930's, it is estimated that sixty to seventy percent considered themselves to be followers of the Pure Land School."[17] No source for the estimate is cited, and the figure may be merely Ch'en's own guess, but by all accounts of Buddhism in the early twentieth century, Pure Land piety was dominant within the lay community and growing within the sangha. The monk Zhenhua confesses that he was often moved to tears when reading some of Yinguang's *gāthās,* which proclaimed in sum: "With Chan there's no one but yourself, while Pure Land borrows Buddha's strength; when these are on a balance weighed, Pure Land seems best suited to our need. . . . For men in times of Law's decay, this way alone can meet the test."[18] Taixu emphatically disagreed with such teaching and asserted that too many lay devotees and too many monks were satisfied with the passive way of dependence without understanding its profound doctrinal basis or the value of the active way.

In accord with his emphasis on a "Buddhism for human life," Taixu attempted to redress what he considered to be an unfortunate imbalance within the Chinese Buddhist community between these two possible forms of Mahāyāna piety. This effort was grounded in his belief that the active way, the way of self-reliance, was the most appropriate and responsible form of Buddhist practice in the modern world, and that the dominance of the passive way, the way of dependence, had led to deleterious misunderstandings of the religion both inside and outside of the Sangha. In other words, as an ethical pietist for whom religion primarily meant doing things—above all, engaging in compassionate forms of social interaction—the visionary and otherworldly emphasis of Pure Land devotionalism was counterproductive.

Thus Taixu was convinced that, rather than encouraging members of the Mahāyāna community to proceed energetically in their own practice of selfless service in the world, such devotionalism had led them to postpone action in favor of reliance on visualization of the pure lands, the worship of images, and the recitation of the name of

Amitābha Buddha *(nian fo)* in hopes of rebirth in another cosmic realm. In fact, as Taixu emphasized in his last series of lectures, many people were confused about the true nature of a bodhisattva:

> Everyone knows the name "bodhisattva," but most people really do not understand its true meaning. Usually people take images to represent bodhisattvas. If they see an image made of mud or carved of wood, or sculptured in relief, or made of metal, or painted, or made of paper, then they all call these images "bodhisattvas." They even refer to imported toy dolls as "foreign bodhisattvas." This is mistaken. This latter habit has especially become a most serious error. We ought to realize that among such images are images of bodhisattvas. However, there are also images of buddhas that have a higher status than bodhisattvas, and there are images of ancient sages and worthies that have a lower status, and even images of demons with the head of an ox and other evil spiritual beings. So we cannot ignorantly call all of them "bodhisattvas." At the same time, we certainly cannot refer to bodhisattvas and images of bodhisattvas as if they were one and the same. If one of us who is living has the heart of a bodhisattva and does the good deeds of a bodhisattva, then that person is a bodhisattva.
>
> *"Pusa"* [bodhisattva] is a rough transliteration of the original term, which in the Indian language sounds like *"puti saduo."* The meaning of *"puti"* [bodhi] is awareness or wisdom; *"saduo"* refers to sentient beings. So together they mean "beings whose essence is wisdom."
>
> The original meaning of "bodhisattva" is one who can manifest a bodhi-mind, who with great wisdom seeks for enlightenment and with a great compassionate heart helps all those who suffer. This is a bodhisattva. Therefore we can take this bodhi-mind as our starting point in order to seek this [enlightenment] and to transform things. If we not only entertain the ideal but are actually able to practice it, we may be called true bodhisattvas. So bodhisattvas are those who are awakened to the truth. They are able to become enlightened themselves and then to awaken others so that all make progress in cultivating supreme enlightenment. These are enlightenment beings. Therefore bodhisattvas are obviously not lifeless images but those who have a bodhi-mind.[19]

According to Taixu, the most efficacious path for those pursuing bodhisattvahood is not through some celestial realm or distant pure land. Rather, it takes our common, ordinary human experience on this plane as its starting point and "proceeds step by step toward sacrality and creates a pure land, progressing from shallow to deep, changing the inferior to the superior."[20] Yet Taixu was not oblivious to the "dynamic" of the bodhisattva myth and its "extraordinary" dimension. In fact, his student Yinshun was later to criticize him for not sufficiently attacking the worship of celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It might be said that Taixu was trying to recover this very dynamic in his tradition by highlighting the "ordinary" and looking for the miraculous not so much in the heavens as in the human heart. As he put it elsewhere, "In Buddhism, the bodhisattva is certainly not an idol shaped from clay or carved from wood, but is a kind of person who has great thoughts about transforming the cosmos and improving human life."[21] For Taixu, because all human beings are capable of manifesting this great bodhi-mind, all are by nature bodhisattvas, even if they do not recognize it; they need only awaken to this fact and take up the path toward a full and complete enlightenment. "Buddhism puts the emphasis on actual conduct in life, on living the truth," he wrote. "It does not end in talk."[22]

A PRELUDE TO THE PATH

The traditional prescriptions for learning the path step by step are detailed in the Mahāyāna tradition for the typical bodhisattva (that is, for the bodhisattva who still has far to go in his study). Accordingly, Taixu commented, "The study course that I am advocating is especially for encouraging bodhisattvas who have only just begun to aspire to a bodhi-mind. The intent is to help people to become great-hearted common bodhisattvas, not those bodhisattvas who are instantly able to transcend the two vehicles [of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas]."[23]

The course of study involves progression through a series of ten stages *(shi di)* involving both visionary and ethical attainment. The course, Taixu said, is much like one's progression from kindergarten

to advanced doctoral studies. It proceeds through three basic movements: (1) preliminary expressions of "right faith" *(zheng xin)* and taking refuge in the Three Jewels *(san bao);* (2) conversion experiences, which constitute the production of the thought of enlightenment that issues forth in great vows of compassion *(bei yuan);* and (3) practice of the Six Perfections *(liu du).*

For Taixu, preparation for the long course begins by a simple opening of the heart that is more profound than mere intellectual assent. "According to the *Huayan jing,*" observed the Chinese master, "'faith is the origin of the way and the mother of merit that nurtures the roots of all goodness.'. . . Therefore even if practitioners perform every kind of good deed, if they do not have faith, their deeds are polluted and unclean and insufficient to attain the highest path."[24] As he commented elsewhere, "It is difficult to discover the truth of Buddhism in the theories and innumerable works that have been written on the subject. To grasp it we must first of all open our hearts after the manner of the Buddha; it is enough if we have glimpsed the truth for an instant, and although we cannot expect to attain to perfect enlightenment immediately, nevertheless, we shall have the consolation of never again falling into an inferno of darkness."[25]

People give witness to the opening of their hearts in faith, he explained, most importantly by taking refuge in the Three Jewels of Buddhism. In a spirit of self-sacrifice, they should joyfully declare in the presence of others, "I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha." With excited anticipation but a calm mind, they should prostrate themselves and dedicate their lives to making this statement actually meaningful day by day. According to Taixu, the feelings commonly associated with taking refuge in the Three Jewels are much like those of a person who, after having encountered terrible difficulties in the world, returns home to the security and understanding of compassionate parents.

As one way of distancing himself from those who emphasized dependence on celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas, Taixu maintained that, among the three refuges, taking refuge in the Dharma always has precedence. "The Three Jewels are the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha," he stated, "but in the order of their importance for awakening faith,

it begins with the Dharma."[26] According to Taixu, the Dharma in which Buddhists take refuge has two meanings. The narrow or more common meaning of "Dharma" refers to those things specifically taught by Gautama. Yet the term refers more broadly to truth in its all-encompassing sense. This universal truth is discerned through a wisdom that lays bare the nature of reality as it really is. Therefore, Taixu maintained, those who wish to enter the bodhisattva path fundamentally take refuge in this holistic Dharma and not in any particular buddha or celestial bodhisattva.

Nevertheless, while those who wish to become bodhisattvas ought to consider the Dharma as their principal refuge, their secondary refuge is, of course, Śākyamuni. He is not only their master and model, according to Taixu, but their "good friend"as well. "The Buddha is not a creator of the cosmos and human life," he remarked, "nor is he a lord of the universe who causes misfortunes and grants blessings. He is one who has completely awakened to the truth about the cosmos and human life and at the same time has expounded numerous enlightened principles to instruct people. . . . Before he awoke to the truth, he was the same as all other sentient beings. However, through his teachings about enlightenment, he has become a good friend of all beings."[27]

Taixu believed that all those taking up the bodhisattva path should recognize that taking refuge in Śākyamuni means taking refuge in all the buddhas of the ten directions and three realms "because the wisdom and virtue of the buddhas is perfectly complete and all buddhas are absolutely equal. So while we only take refuge in our root teacher Śākyamuni, in principle we also take refuge in all of the buddhas."[28] The ultimate goal is to realize what these great beings have already realized—that is, to achieve buddhahood *(cheng fo)*. Taixu wrote:

> The doctrines of Buddhism concern transforming this world of physical and mental phenomena from one in which there are a myriad of living beings into one in which there are buddhas. This world and a buddha-realm are not separate because all living beings are in fact already buddhas. If this is so, what is the distinction between buddhas and all living beings? Although both reside in this world of physical and mental phenomena, the myriad of living beings are confused and deluded. For this reason their activities in the world, which stem from their physical and mental states, are disorderly and harmful. As a result, the world has become one of hardship and suffering. . . . Yet if their minds become like mirrors, then what is reflected in the clear brightness of the mirrors will also become clear and bright. Then a buddha-realm will consist of all living beings. We need only an opportunity for cultivation and we can straighten out and transform the world of physical and mental phenomena. Then every person will have the possibility of becoming a buddha. It is for this reason that the Buddhist scriptures say that every living being can become a buddha.[29]

Finally, those hopeful of realizing their buddhahood must take refuge in the Sangha, the community of people who both believe the Dharma and seek to abide in it while supporting one another. "The meaning of 'Sangha,'" explained Taixu, "is 'a unified community.'"[30] In India, he remarked, the term originally applied to any group of at least four monks who lived together according to Buddhist monastic disciplines. Subsequently, it came to be used more broadly for the entire community of monastic and lay followers. Accordingly, Mahāyāna broadened its understanding of the third refuge. In Mahāyāna, as Sangharakshita has observed, refuge in the Sangha means "not refuge in the Stream-Entrant, the Once-Returner, the Non-Returner, and the Arhant, who for the Mahāyāna typify spiritual individualism, but in the Assembly of the Bodhisattvas."[31]

Scholars have differed in their interpretations of a fundamental ambiguity about the monastic sangha that is reflected in Taixu's writings. For example, acknowledging the difficulties in characterizing the reformer's position, Gotelind Müller emphasized the aspects of his work that highlight the significance and unique efficacy of the monastic career.[32] Holmes Welch, however, accenting Taixu's negativism toward the monastic system of his day, argued that the Chinese master "had grave doubts about monkhood" and "seriously contemplated returning to lay life himself several times."[33] These two interpretations are finally grounded in Taixu's functional evaluation of both the monastic and the lay career. According to Taixu, if persons can best

deepen their bodhisattvahood and advance the Buddhist mission as monks or nuns, they should adhere to the monastic life, whereas if they can best make progress toward these ends as members of the laity, then they need not view the lay life as a fundamentally less worthy career.

On the one hand, Taixu specifically recommended the stricter regimens of the monastic life, especially for those bodhisattvas who had only recently taken up the path. He never abandoned the monastic order himself and recruited other gifted lay followers to join it.[34] Despite his own sharp criticism of most of the Chinese monasteries of his day, and of the practices of the majority of the monks and nuns who lived in them, Taixu resented the sweeping denigration of the monastic order by lay critics, such as Ouyang Jingwu, and by former Buddhists who had renounced the religion, such as Liang Shuming. On the other hand, by asserting that monasticism was not necessarily the right choice for everyone, and by readily accepting the practice of moving back and forth between monastic and lay careers, he confused and dismayed many Buddhist leaders.[35]

In sum, Taixu held that the deeply personal decision about the two careers was essentially a vocational one—and one that, in accord with the implications of Mahāyāna doctrine, was of no ultimate consequence vis-à-vis a person's potential for attaining full enlightenment. Historically, Śākyamuni's monastic way of life had been shown to be more advantageous for realizing selflessness for most people.[36] For Taixu personally, it remained the more highly regarded choice, and one without which the transmission of the Dharma would be immediately jeopardized. Yet the monastery could not be regarded as an absolute religious end. Ultimately, he averred, if a person was not willing to manifest a bodhi-mind, it did not matter whether he or she practiced the religion as a monastic or as a householder. "In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the bodhisattva's course of study considers the manifestation of bodhi-mind as its greatest aim," he emphasized, ". . . the bodhisattva's preparation lies most importantly in spiritual and practical actions; it has never been restricted to a fixed form."[37]

Indeed, Buddhism was established on the interdependence of the monastic and householder forms. To validate only one form would

not only contradict Śākyamuni's intentions but result in "a dead rather than living Buddhism."[38] Accordingly, as Reichelt observed in 1934, Taixu remained intimately related to the educated Buddhist literati and granted them an influential role in both administration and worship, "a concession formerly quite unthinkable in Buddhist circles." Reichelt stated:

> In former days it was recognized that a "jushi" could never take the place of an ordained monk. In the taking of all the great vows, an ordained monk was supposed to have been initiated in a special way through the *biqiu* ordination, so that he could influence all the different spheres in the wheel of Karma. A fierce controversy arose some years ago in connection with the question of whether a highly devoted and learned lay Buddhist who greatly overshadows the average monk, both in regard to a pious life and a deep understanding, might officiate during worship. The conservative monks most energetically opposed their right to do this. Not so with Taixu. Without compromising himself he found a *modus vivendi,* whereby the leading lay devotees could officiate *together* with a group of monks. Some of these prominent lay devotees and higher type monks will, from time to time, follow their esteemed leader Taixu on his journeys, when he conducts lecture series and modern "revival meetings" in different centres of China.[39]

One of Taixu's most significant contributions in this area, according to his student Dongchu, was the understanding counsel that he consistently offered to young monks who chose to return to lay life.[40] Taixu observed that, although during the early Republican years there seemed to be a slight increase in people joining the order, the total number of monks and nuns remained essentially unchanged because of the many monastics who chose to leave the monastery for secular life. He recognized that in most cases these people subsequently suffered from a tremendous sense of failure, shame, and guilt. Most of them, in fact, hid their monastic past from others and cut themselves off from the Buddhist community altogether.

Taixu wanted to encourage such persons to remain active as laypeople within the Sangha rather than become thoroughly secularized citizens without any commitment to advancing the Buddhist mission.

He even recommended that they organize, with a real sense of pride, an "Association of Former Buddhist Monastics Who Returned to the Lay Life" (Sengqie huansu fotu hui) to promote and defend the religion and serve the public.[41]

Nevertheless, Taixu thought that some regulations were necessary to protect the integrity of the cloistered community. First, he suggested, while it ought to be fairly easy for believers to go back and forth between the two forms of Buddhist communal life, after someone had left the order to return to lay life a third time, that person should not be permitted to return to the sangha. Second, to avoid any possibility of misrepresentation, former monks and nuns living as lay Buddhists should always wear secular clothes and use their secular names. Third, until such time as they returned to the monastery, they should keep the minimal Dharmic requirements for a householder bodhisattva and not live as ordinary non-Buddhists. Fourth, when returning to the monastic life, they must completely start over with the tonsure rite and the taking of monastic precepts.[42] His concern was with the purity of the monastic sangha. As he once wrote,

> The laws of Buddhism permit individuals to renounce their precepts and return to lay life. This return is not necessarily because they are unable to keep the precepts. It may be because they want to engage in activities related to saving the country and protecting the religion. But those who cannot keep the basic four precepts of the monastic path—against sexual misconduct, stealing, killing, and lying (especially against illicit sexual relations)—must return to the laity. . . . Thus the monastic community will be able to remain pure. If the monastic community remains pure, then the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha all will continue to receive the people's respect and reverence. To renounce the monastic precepts is not the same as abandoning one's faith in the Buddhist Dharma. One should still keep the three refuges and five precepts—at least the three refuges—and advocate and sing the praises of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, support the Three Jewels, and become an example for lay householders. By such actions a person is still able to help Buddhism flourish.[43]

THE TURN TOWARD ENLIGHTENMENT

Taking the three refuges as a way of being in the world, those of right faith who would become bodhisattvas commit themselves to the study and practice of the Dharma in the hope that the thought of enlightenment might actually arise within them. In this regard, Taixu reminded his students that life on this earthly human plane is extremely significant and precious. This is so, he stated, precisely because, in the Buddhist scheme of salvation, the human plane is the most crucial stage within the three great realms of desire, form, and formlessness.

From a Buddhist perspective, the definition of those who are subject to instruction is a somewhat complicated issue, Taixu remarked: "There are beings whose intelligence and knowledge is lower than humans, and there are beings whose knowledge is higher. Despite this fact, all consider the human plane to be the pivotal point for the rise or fall of all sentient beings [in levels of spiritual awareness and levels of existence]."[44]

Those human beings who are not diligent in good actions, he continued, will fall in subsequent rebirths in the direction of levels characterized by increased suffering, while those who make concerted efforts to cultivate themselves according to Dharmic principles will rise in the direction of levels of increased equanimity. Thus the human plane is the turning point—the fundamental pivot, or axis—in the process of spiritual transformation on which the future of all depends.

Moreover, wishing to counter overly deterministic interpretations of karma, Taixu frequently asserted that human beings have sufficient freedom for such decisive turning. As Hong Jinlian has observed, while acknowledging that every person's freedom is limited by biological and social factors, the Chinese master claimed not only that humans were those sentient beings most able to rise above their given circumstances, but also that "by relying on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, they could truly make evolutionary progress to attain in the end complete and perfect freedom."[45]

Karmic histories may serve to predispose people toward certain thoughts and behavior, but they never fully determine human choice. Indeed, Taixu stated,

> Although human beings are only one form of sentient life, their wisdom and compassion are greater than those of other beings. Therefore, they are able to use their intelligence to investigate the myriad things in existence. Furthermore, with accumulated human knowledge, they are able to engage in different kinds of interchange and assistance, and through this activity to perfect a creative advance.[46]

In consonance with the impatient yet optimistic spirit of modernity, Taixu chose to emphasize that right faith in the Three Jewels and the production of a bodhi-mind were not of necessity the product of arduously accumulating karmic merit over the course of many lifetimes. Although for many bodhisattvas this might indeed be the case, the Chinese master wanted his students to hear his message about a "creative advance" as one of immediacy and hope. Thus Taixu maintained that if practitioners have a reasonably good karmic background, have received a fair amount of education, are devoted to further study, and can believe joyfully in the bodhisattva's way, they can directly receive the right faith that leads to enlightenment.[47] Bodhisattvas can in this very lifetime become awakened to their bodhisattvahood. Moreover, this is true for women as well as for men.[48]

With regard to producing the thought of enlightenment in Mahāyāna, D. T. Suzuki once asserted that *bodhicitta,* or the "intelligence-heart," is awakened in us "either when love for suffering creatures (which is innate in us) is called forth, or when our intellect aspires after the highest enlightenment, or when these two psychical activities are set astir under some favorable circumstances."[49] Although the fortuitous convergence of favorable karmic background, emotions, and aspirations can never be predicted for any given person, the transforming religious experiences that mark the real turning point in the bodhisattva career are, according to Taixu, both life-shattering and life-renewing. They are like the crumbling of a huge mountain that has obstructed one's view, thus creating new vistas of the distant

horizon. In fact, Taixu asserted, all religions are grounded in functionally similar types of decentering and reorienting spiritual experiences. As he commented in 1933,

> What today is called "religion" *(zongjiao)* in ancient times was called "education" *(jiaohua)*. If you examine the structural elements of religion, there are reasons for it to be called education. It certainly results from one special characteristic. The founders of all religions and all new religious sects or denominations must have had at the very heart of their spiritual life experiences that surpass conventional understanding. These kinds of experiences are extraordinary spiritual experiences. What we ordinarily know, for example, through hearing, seeing, smelling, touching, and tasting all comes from sense contact. These kinds of sensations can form knowledge through intellectual activities and inferences of thought. However, religions are established not merely on this kind of knowledge, but even more on extraordinary experiences. . . . Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism all have this element. In China, Confucianism, Daoism, and other religions without exception also have it.[50]

In a 1940 article entitled "Wo de zongjiao jingyan" (My Religious Experiences), Taixu acknowledged three separate religious experiences that were pivotally important in his early life, each drawing him ever more profoundly into the Buddhist world.[51] As noted earlier, the first and most significant event took place in 1907 at the Xifang si, where the young novice had just begun his first studies of Mahāyāna scripture. It was, he remarked, the real beginning of his "new life" in Buddhism. As he later recalled in his autobiography,

> One day when reading scripture, suddenly I lost a sense of the world of physical and mental phenomena. In a state of emptiness, I experienced a spiritual brightness. The innumerable worldly defilements became completely luminous, like pure images floating in the air. Although I sat there with the scriptures for several hours, it seemed to be only an instant. Several days later, my body and mind were still light-hearted and contented. Within the next several days, I read the rest of the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, as well as the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra,* and immediately I had insight into the nature of all things. . . . This was for me the slough-

ing off of all the defilements of the world and achieving the beginning of my new life in Buddhism.[52]

Subsequent memorable religious experiences occurred in 1914 and 1916, deepening Taixu's commitment to the bodhisattva path. "Through each of these three meditative experiences," he remarked, "my psychological as well as physiological conditions were changed."[53] The "new life" that the path represented, according to the monk, involved an unchangeable and unshakable faith in Mahāyāna. Attaining that kind of enlightened faith, he said, "is like eating a small diamond that can never be digested."[54] Yet meditative trance can quickly become a dangerous attachment if it is unrelated to compassionate activity. Thus while testifying to the significance of his own three religious experiences, Taixu concluded, "Because a compassionate vow of the heart is so important, I did not continue deeper into meditative trance *(chanding)*. Therefore I had no further experiences [of this kind]."[55]

Taixu emphasized that in Mahāyāna the production of a bodhi-mind and the four great universal vows of a bodhisattva *(si hong shiyuan)* are integrally interrelated. While the thought of enlightenment is a private experience inaccessible to others, the vows are public declarations. For the true bodhisattva, however, they are inseparable. As Har Dayal has explained, "*praṇidhāna* [a bodhisattva's vow of compassion] is both the cause and the result of the Thought of Enlightenment."[56]

Similarly, according to Taixu, the four universal vows are completely interrelated. Yet in contrast to their traditional order, the fourth resolve is the most fundamental: "I vow to become perfect in the supreme Buddhist law." The effort to attain the highest level of understanding—the wisdom of a buddha—he argued, must always remain the bodhisattva's greatest hope and desire. This is achieved, however, only through the complementary and simultaneous fulfillment of the other three universal vows. Becoming a buddha, therefore, means manifesting the unsurpassable Dharma for the sake of all other beings. "To become a buddha," asserted Taixu, "means taking as one's goal the preaching of the Dharma in order to save all living beings. If one does not act to save them, then there is absolutely no way to attain Buddhahood. Therefore one makes the first resolve, 'I vow to save all sentient beings.'"[57]

This entails, he noted, the elimination not only of one's own passions and delusions but of other people's as well. The two are not sequential in Taixu's mind; rather, they are fully coordinated and interdependent activities. "True bodhisattvas," he remarked, "take the heart of all beings as their own hearts, so that only when the passions and delusions of all other beings are destroyed are their own passions and delusions finally silenced."[58] Therefore true bodhisattvas take the second universal resolve, "I vow to put an end to all passions and delusions."

Of course, the cultivation of wisdom is required in order to understand fully the hearts of others, comprehend Buddhism's ways of healing, and hence be equipped to save all beings from error. To become a bodhisattva thus means to become a student. As Taixu put it, "How is this wisdom to be engendered? It comes from study. For this reason, the Buddha said, 'Within the three worlds, all the buddhas have arisen from a foundation of learning.' So if people are not willing to study, they will always be situated among the foolish. How, then, can they take part in becoming a buddha?"[59]

For the bodhisattva, study involves reflection both on internal and external realities and on the multiple doors to enlightenment *(fa men)* within the Mahāyāna tradition. According to the reformer, "The illnesses of sentient beings are innumerable and limitless. Yet the Buddha said that the medicines of the Dharma which cure illnesses are also innumerable and limitless. Therefore those who want to become buddhas and save beings must study all doors to enlightenment and make the third resolve, 'I vow to study and learn all methods and means.'"[60]

These are the four universal resolves of all bodhisattvas, and to contradict them in thought and action is a great sin. In fact, Taixu explained, within the traditions of the monastic community there are four great *pārājika dharmas (ta sheng chu fa)*, or serious offenses, that result in permanent expulsion from the order (namely, sexual intercourse, theft, killing, and false proclamation of superhuman faculties). These four monastic sins have parallels that are more broadly applic-

able to all bodhisattvas. The first unpardonable sin for a bodhisattva, Taixu says, is "to lose one's beneficent heart" *(shi lirenxin)*, so that one is unwilling to sacrifice anything for the sake of another. The second is "to lose one's great compassionate heart" *(shi beixin)*, so that when asked for material assistance by poor and suffering people, the bodhisattva gives no aid, or when asked for instruction in accord with the Dharma, the bodhisattva offers no guidance.

The third sin is "to lose one's great heart of sympathy" *(shi cixin)*, so that when people come to the bodhisattva to confess their transgressions against the Dharma, the bodhisattva rejects them and is unwilling to accept their confessions. The fourth unpardonable sin is "to lose one's great wisdom heart" *(shi zhihuixin)*, so that "one slanders the teachings of Mahāyāna and with perverse views establishes a false Dharma to entice and deceive others."[61] Committing any one of these four sins results from a failure to protect and promote the bodhi-mind and is clear evidence that the person has lost the qualifications necessary for the true bodhisattva path.

PRECEPTS AND PERFECTIONS

The essence of the true path is the practice of the precepts and perfections. The initial practice of both monastic and householder bodhisattvas actually consists of the five precepts *(wu jie)* and their fuller elaboration in the ten meritorious actions *(shi shan)*. Asserting that the active doing of good fulfills and completes the passive avoidance of evil, Taixu typically listed the traditional five precepts in a way that included both a negative and positive component. Thus he enumerated the five basic precepts as: (1) not to kill, but to express love; (2) not to steal, but to benefit others; (3) not to act in a lewd or lustful way, but to act with decorum; (4) not to lie, but to speak with sincerity; and (5) not to drink intoxicating beverages that affect the body and cloud the mind, but rather, with wisdom, to regulate the body and mind. The first four of these, Taixu stated, are called the "precepts of natural law" *(xing jie)* because they prohibit acts that harm other beings. The fifth is referred to as a "precautionary precept" *(zhe jie)* because it is intended to prevent careless and intoxication-related moral lapses of the first four kinds.[62]

The Chinese monk acknowledged that, by citing the precepts in this way, he was linking the five negatively formulated Buddhist precepts with the five positively stated constant virtues of the Confucian tradition—benevolence *(ren)*, righteousness *(yi)*, propriety *(li)*, sincerity *(xin)*, and knowledge *(zhi)*—as others had done before him. Elaboration of the precepts yields the ten meritorious actions: abstention from taking life, stealing, and sexual misconduct; from false, malicious, harsh, and senseless language; and from covetousness, ill will, and wrong views. While the five precepts and ten meritorious actions are required of all bodhisattvas, monks, and nuns must keep an additional five precepts: abstention from (a) adorning one's body with flowers or perfumes, (b) engaging in or being entertained by singing and dancing, (c) sleeping on a high or broad bed, (d) eating at prohibited times, and (e) accumulating money or material goods. Although these additional five precepts are not required of householder bodhisattvas, Taixu encouraged his lay followers to practice the first four of them occasionally for specific periods of time, as beneficial religious disciplines.

By attending to the substance and spirit of all the precepts, monastic and householder bodhisattvas guard their *bodhicitta* and lay the foundation for the most difficult phase of the path, the practice of the Six Perfections *(pāramitās)*: giving, morality, patience, zeal, concentration, and insight. According to Taixu, the practice of the perfections has a profoundly transformative effect on new bodhisattvas. Making the four universal vows, he remarked, is like creating a great sea basin so large that filling it would require immense mountains of soil. In effect, the perfections fill the basin of the sea with the mountains—the promise with the practice. "If this does not occur," wrote the Chinese master, "then the vows amount to nothing and one is a false bodhisattva and not a true bodhisattva, for the way *(dao)* of a bodhisattva consists in practicing the Six Perfections."[63]

Unfortunately, bodhisattvas new to the path never fully grasp the practical scope of the perfections' true meaning. For example, the first perfection, giving *(bushi)*, is often misinterpreted as charity or the simple sharing of surplus financial resources. Yet in Mahāyāna, Taixu

claimed, its meaning is far more profound. To begin with, he said, a bodhisattva can distinguish between "internal gifts" and "external gifts." The former involve sharing one's physical body, or parts thereof, even to the point of giving one's life for sentient beings in need. Buddhist literature about bodhisattva activity is replete with stories of blood, eyes, arms, and the like being selflessly offered. External gifts, in contrast, refer to personal property or other material goods that are freely directed to those who require them or can benefit from them. In fact, giving may include a variety of actions, from offering instruction in the Dharma to acts of heroic rescue when the lives or liberties of others are threatened. Yet each act of giving, according to Taixu, is perfected by bodhisattvas as they identify with other persons and willingly sacrifice themselves for the benefit of others, knowing that, ultimately, no "others" exist apart from "self."

The second perfection, morality *(chijie)*, is often thought to mean the simple observance of specified behavioral prohibitions. On the contrary, the Chinese monk remarked, perfect morality is far more encompassing. The negative or passive *(xiaoji)* dimension requires cessation of evil acts, while the positive or active *(jiji)* dimension involves performance of morally meritorious acts. For monastic and householder bodhisattvas, morality means "not lip service but real practice."[64] Moreover, morality is not merely preparation for the path: it is path activity. As it is gradually perfected, it transcends mundane moral observance by moving beyond the perception of distorting dualities involved with separate moral actors, although the practice remains. Responding to critics who judged Buddhism to be a strictly otherworldly religion, removed from the concerns of daily life, Taixu asserted:

> In China, many scholars as well as common people, because they have not understood Buddhism, have made all kinds of mistaken criticisms of the Dharma. They have often thought that Buddhism is not concerned with social morality or human life. Especially with respect to those scholars who have discussed Chinese philosophy or philosophies of human life, this kind of misunderstanding is increasingly problematic. Actually, with regard to the reason for Śākyamuni preaching the Dharma, although his motive was broadly [to aid] all sentient beings, his central concern in preaching the Dharma was human beings. Therefore, Buddhism is truly a religion concerning humans, and all the theories and principles of morality set forth by the Buddha are not unrelated to the human realm. Therefore, when it is said that Buddhism is not concerned with social morality and human life, those who have studied the Dharma even just a little bit know instantly that such a statement is wrong.[65]

The scope of patience *(renru)*, the third perfection, has also been insufficiently understood. Although for some it may mean simply not being hasty or impetuous, for Taixu it represents, far more profoundly, the perfection of forbearance and forgiveness in the face of insult and persecution. As conscientious bodhisattvas strive to live up to their great vows of compassion, he observed, many people in this wicked age will try to obstruct and willfully destroy whatever good bodhisattvas are able to accomplish, seeking to discredit those on the path and sway them from their resolve. Yet despite these attacks, according to Taixu, true bodhisattvas "not only endure the insults but, repaying hatred with kindness, refuse to abandon such people."[66]

The fourth perfection, zeal or vigor *(jingjin)*, is often understood to mean mere diligence in accomplishing a task. Yet one can be diligent, noted the reformer, in pursuing unworthy goals as well as worthy ones. Thus, for bodhisattvas, "zeal" specifically means an unflagging spiritual and physical energy for the requirements of their self-sacrificing career. The Chinese character *"jing"* in the compound denotes both purity *(jing chun)* and simplicity *(wu za)* of spirit, while the character *"jin"* means "to advance." Thus, with an uncomplicated spirit of service, bodhisattvas course in an enlightened path, never allowing their individual concerns to determine the most appropriate action, resisting laziness, and taking upon themselves the most important responsibility on earth: awakening all sentient beings to the truth.

Concentration *(chanding)*, the fifth perfection, is widely misunderstood both inside and outside of the Buddhist community, according to Taixu. It is a great mistake, he argued, to assume that meditative concentration requires achieving, through physical austerities and

mental disengagement, a state in which one becomes like wood or stone. Such a state might be said to characterize the negative or passive dimension of sitting in meditation to control a scattered and confused mind. However, such a popularly held view is incomplete. "The comprehensive view of concentration," stated Taixu, "means in every circumstance holding on to one's vitality *(huo li)* so as to be able to accomplish everything. Thus concentration certainly does not refer merely to the negative or passive dimension in which one cannot do anything, but rather more correctly to the source of the vitality for undertaking all things."[67]

In essence, concentration is related far more significantly to action than to non-action. As Callahan once commented, "Taixu seems to regard meditation primarily as a means for improving conduct, not as an end in itself. These beliefs afford a religious basis for Taixu's emphasis upon social service and philanthropy."[68] Some Buddhists, declared Taixu, "feel that their own existence is extremely painful. Therefore they hold to the empty side of Buddhist emptiness *(kong)* in order merely to seek an escape from the realm of birth and death and attain absolute spiritual equanimity and non-action. . . . Because they lie around in a drunken stupor in a state of samādhi focusing on emptiness *(kongsanmei)*, naturally they are never able to reach the complete and perfect spirit of Buddhism."[69]

The sixth perfection, insight or wisdom *(zhihui)*, means, in the simplest terms, learned knowledge. Yet contrary to the opinions of some, this wisdom is neither fully continuous nor discontinuous with knowledge derived from the senses, according to Taixu. On the one hand, Dharmic wisdom and worldly knowledge are closely related because both are finally concerned with investigating the true nature of things. Therefore bodhisattvas need to pursue learning through the normal disciplines of the arts and sciences, becoming adept at thinking carefully and clearly and at understanding all aspects of the world around them.

On the other hand, the experiential insight that is at the heart of the enlightened life, that was realized by Śākyamuni, and that is reflected in Buddhist scripture and tradition transcends and completes all worldly knowledge, Taixu maintained. Thus bodhisattvas must seek, beyond all conventional bits of knowledge, that superior and comprehensive wisdom which is available only through an awakened bodhi-mind. In essence, true bodhisattvas integrate insights from both sources. Indeed, as Taixu pointed out, "*The Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says, 'There are no places that are not places for bodhisattvas to teach.' Now I say that with regard to places for bodhisattvas to learn, it is the same."[70]

ESTABLISHING A PURE LAND ON EARTH

Bodhisattvas course in the unified practice of the Six Perfections, with the practice of one perfection simultaneously entailing practice of the other five. Moreover, especially in their teaching of all other beings *(huadao dazhong)*, as they seek to draw all sentient beings to Buddhism, bodhisattvas manifest "the four all-embracing virtues" *(si shefa)*—namely, generosity in giving to any being in need *(bushi)*, affability in speaking with people *(aiyu)*, altruism in relating to others *(lixing)*, and cooperation in pursuing worthy common aims *(tongshi)*. In the Mahāyāna tradition, the object of the four all-embracing virtues is the conversion of all sentient beings. Taixu asserted that bodhisattvas convert others most readily when they embody with integrity the truths that they proclaim verbally, when they identify and associate with common people in all walks of life and in all circumstances, and when they devote themselves to compassionate service, whatever the cost. Wrote the monk,

> If those on the bodhisattva path, in accord with the depth of their own intelligence and ability, adopt the practice of the Six Perfections and the four all-embracing virtues, then they will complete their bodhisattva personality. In whatever walk of life, whether their service is in the cultural sphere, education, benevolent work, the government, the military, or as a student, a merchant, or a farmer, . . . they will establish a practical Buddhism for human life and build a paradisaical pure land of peace and happiness.[71]

According to Mahāyāna doctrine, a pure land *(jingtu)* is one of two kinds of world systems, or buddha-fields *(focha, fotu,* or *foguo),* over which a buddha has special spiritual authority. An impure buddha-field, like the one suffering under "the five dreaded calamities of degeneracy" *(wu zhuo)* into which Śākyamuni chose to be born, is far different from a pure buddha-field, the most famous of which is Sukhāvatī, the abode of Amitābha. In an impure land, sentient beings of all kinds (superhuman, human, and subhuman) suffer miserably under the influence of the three defilements (greed, hatred, and delusion) and face near impossible odds in producing the thought of enlightenment.

In a pure land, in contrast, the gods and human beings who dwell therein enjoy extremely favorable conditions for cultivating a bodhi-mind. Indeed, that is why such realms exist: certain great bodhisattvas once vowed that, after they had attained final enlightenment, they would establish such advantageous settings in which others could practice the path. When, by virtue of whatever spiritual discipline, Buddhist practitioners are reborn in these pure lands, they can rest assured that they will never regress and be born again in an impure land. Thus they can rejoice in the knowledge that they, too, will eventually attain supreme enlightenment, regardless of how long must be spent in its cultivation.

Like most Chinese Buddhists of his day, Taixu was captivated by the compelling ideal of pursuing enlightenment in the wonderfully conducive surroundings of a paradisaical pure land. Yet his views on the realization of that ideal were far from those of the mainstream of the contemporary Sangha. Rather than focusing on the glories of distant pure lands, which were accessible through reliance on the spiritual merit and power of other great bodhisattvas and buddhas, Taixu visualized this earthly world transformed into a pure land by the dedication and sacrificial hard work of thousands of average bodhisattvas who were mindful of what their concerted witness could mean. Most Chinese Buddhists were content to prayerfully await their rebirth in a celestial pure land; Taixu was impatient about establishing a pure land on earth.

The reformer acknowledged the universal appeal of utopian dreams in an important 1930 lecture entitled "Jianshe renjian jingtu lun" (On Establishing a Pure Land on Earth). From the community's earliest days, he noted, Buddhists have talked enthusiastically of Uttarakuru (Yudanyue zhou), the northern of the four continents that surround Mount Meru in all Indic world systems; Uttarakuru is believed to be a beautiful and superior land in which food is produced without effort and humans live for a thousand years. Similarly, Daoists described ideal states in which the guiding principles of government would be spontaneity *(ziran)* and nonpurposeful activity *(wu wei),* while Confucians trumpeted the ideal world of a "great community" *(datong zhi shi).* In the West, Socrates, Plato, and other philosophers envisioned forms of utopias *(wutuobang),* and the earliest Christians actually embraced (for a period under Peter's leadership) an idealistic form of communism, with the church accepting goods from each believer according to his or her means and distributing them according to people's needs.

Despite the ubiquity of utopian ideals in different times and places, they have usually been rejected out of hand by most "reasonable" people. Indeed, according to Taixu, before enlightened bodhisattvas can make progress toward the goal of establishing a pure land on earth, two unhealthy attitudes must be corrected. The first is the attitude of self-centered optimists who believe that the world is already a marvelous, "pure" land, at least for them. Infatuated with the world, such people have no interest in detaching themselves from it or making any fundamental changes in it. In modern China, Taixu argued, the thoughtlessness and aggressiveness of such people have polarized and impoverished the country.

The second is the attitude of self-centered pessimists who are convinced that no significant changes are truly possible in this impure and sorrowful world of time and space. Lost in dejection and self-pity, a few such people end their lives through suicide; in one way or another, the others also waste their lives, devoid of a sense of meaning and purpose. In China, some seek to escape the social, economic, and political chaos by emigrating to the United States, mistakenly

believing that its relative prosperity and stability make it a "pure land." Most seek, through devotional practice, to escape to Sukhāvatī. In either case, according to Taixu, by aiming merely to escape their unhappy situations and by thinking only of themselves, they fail to fulfill what it really means to be a Chinese patriot or a Chinese Buddhist.

Both these self-absorbed attitudes, Taixu asserted, result from a failure to comprehend the true basis of pure lands and from a profound weakness of will. Yet if people could be led to understand how such utopias actually come into existence, perhaps they could be encouraged to participate in the actual creation of a pure land themselves. "The building of pure lands," he remarked, "is not accomplished by Nature; neither are these lands created by gods. Pure lands have come into being from minds of goodness which have arisen in human and other sentient beings."[72] From such minds of goodness come both the search for certain knowledge and appropriate moral behavior. Such knowledge and behavior yield good societies and wonderfully auspicious worlds. The root cause of pure lands, and in fact of all things, may be so explained. Everything from a small blade of grass to a great celestial body has come into being because of the interaction of innumerable causal elements, all of which originate in the minds of sentient beings. Therefore, Taixu wondered,

> If today, based on good knowledge of our minds, we can produce pure thoughts and work hard to accomplish good deeds, how hard can it be to transform an impure China into a Chinese pure land? . . . All persons have this force of mind, and since they already have the faculty *(benneng)* to create a pure land, they can all make the glorious vow to make this world into a pure land and work hard to achieve it.[73]

Minds that are not tranquil and pure, minds that are confused about the true nature of things, cannot create pure lands. Therefore one must understand through mindful activity the process of becoming that lies at the heart of the Buddhist message. Significantly, in Taixu's view, this ancient insight of the supremely enlightened buddhas now finds confirmation in the modern science of the twentieth century:

> The most recent discoveries of modern science are constantly able to prove the truths of Buddhism. Formerly, according to nineteenth-century science, all the myriad things of the world resulted from the coming together of material atoms. So material atoms were recognized as the building blocks of all things. However, when we come to twentieth-century science, the fact is recognized that there are ultimately no simple building blocks for all the myriad things of the world. Rather, absolutely every single thing comes into being as the result of the convergence of many different conditions of causal relations. This theory is rather close to the Buddhist concept of the constituent nature of all things. Thus because the truth in Buddhism about creating a pure land on earth has already gradually come to be accepted, we can directly lift it up for discussion. In sum, the present world in which humans live is certainly not perfect. However, if humans and other sentient beings vow to make it into a pure land, then there is absolutely no way that it cannot happen. We only have to dispense with our preconceptions and use a reasonable amount of labor to create it![74]

According to Taixu, average bodhisattvas new to the path need to be reminded of the powerful and far-reaching consequences of their vows. Due to causal interactions, a bodhisattva's vows—and the wise and compassionate activities that fulfill those vows—change everything. The very fabric of reality is thus altered. Therefore, although no one can deny the enormity of the task of saving all sentient beings, there is no legitimate reason to despair about what will be required—or about the time required to accomplish it. Bodhisattvas need only begin to practice the precepts and perfections, while seeking practical ways to work toward the ultimate goal of buddhahood.

Practicality was not an unimportant concern in China. Taixu realized that even if bodhisattvas understood the theoretical basis for creating a utopia on earth, there would still be considerable debate about the most practical and realistic methods for accomplishing that mission. For this, the reformer argued, two powerful forces would have to be coordinated: an enlightened government, and a community of bodhisattvas inspired by Mahāyāna Buddhism's true spirit. A stable government would be needed to protect the political rights of the

people, enact and enforce just laws through punishments and rewards, and systematize the reconstructive work. Indeed, the government would have to supervise a fourfold division of labor. Business and industry would have to be developed to address problems related to the four essential needs of the people: food, clothing, housing, and transportation. Education would have to be promoted to reform ways of thinking and to develop people's abilities. The arts would have to flourish to bring enjoyment to the people, elevating their minds and strengthening their bodies. And morality, which was at the heart of education, would have to be advanced so that the new society would be grounded in values such as integrity, tolerance, and sincerity.

A Chinese Sangha inspired by the true spirit of Mahāyāna, the second reshaping force for an earthly utopia, would necessarily illuminate the healing and transforming way of bodhisattvas while locating all worldly activity within a cosmic framework. Such a Sangha would raise the pursuit of truth and goodness beyond the limited parameters of governmental insight and authority to the most profoundly spiritual bases for an enlightened existence. According to Taixu, bodhisattvas on the true path would propagate a "worldly Buddhism" or a "humanistic Buddhism" *(renjian fojiao)*, a form of the religion that was neither monastically nor devotionally centered but energetically concerned with perfecting human life and advancing the social order.[75] In their socially engaged practice of Mahāyāna, such bodhisattvas would compassionately attend to all three dimensions of human need—spiritual, physical, and social—while, as missionaries of an unsurpassable wisdom, they would recontextualize all family, community, national, and international issues by explicit reference to the Three Jewels of Buddhism.[76] Bodhisattvas would not only develop methods for "curing symptoms" *(zhi biao)* but, more radically than mere governmental representatives ever could, they would cure the root causes *(zhi ben)* of human suffering.

Beyond merely offering an abstract religious rationale for creating a pure land, Taixu was eager to detail plans for concretely establishing a modern pure land in China. Chinese Buddhists, he argued, would need to begin by setting up a special administrative area in which the two forces of enlightened government and true religion could cooperate in an ideal fashion, not unlike the systems that had

traditionally existed in Thailand and Tibet. Of all the possible locations within China, he judged that the holy grounds of Putuo Shan in Zhejiang province would be the most suitable location. If that were not feasible, he said, the selected site should at least have similarly ample natural resources: luxuriant forests of bamboo and trees, fertile soil, abundant spring water, and a mountain with a circumference of at least several tens of *li*. Appropriate plots of land within the chosen area should be sown with rice, hemp, and other crops so that basic food and clothing could be provided for ten to twenty thousand people. Because of its special use by the Sangha, all of the designated pure land should be declared tax-exempt by the government.

On a high mountain plateau within the pure land, a great central monastery should be built. According to Taixu's plan, at the very heart of the monastery should stand a large shrine hall dedicated to the Buddha Śākyamuni. This central hall for general use should be flanked on the left by lecture and assembly halls for those studying the special texts of the Prajñāpāramitā (Wisdom Literature) school, on the right by those concentrating on *The Lotus Sūtra*, and to the rear by a Buddhist library. Surrounding these core structures would be adjoining facilities for the study of other significant Buddhist scriptures and practices (including those of well-known schools such as Huayan, Chan, and Zhenyan, as well as less popular schools like those dedicated to Vairocana or Maitreya).[77] Altogether, the great monastery should accommodate between five hundred and a thousand monks. These devotees would study, pray, and work together daily, while expressing the unique aspects of their own schools' special heritages and each year undertaking at least one major project jointly.

Near the great monastery, according to the master's plan, would be a hall for male novices *(shami)*, of whom there ought to be about a hundred, where they would take their first vows and be tonsured during an initial period of Buddhist studies. There should be similar halls for ordained nuns *(biqiuni)* and for female novices *(shamini)*, who would number between four and eight hundred. Altogether, the facilities for the monastic order should occupy at least 4 square *li*.[78]

The lay Buddhist community should be comprised of about eight thousand people in a thousand different families. These should reside in three grades of villages called, in order of rank, "Ten Meritorious

Actions" villages, "Five Precepts" villages, and "Three Refuges" villages. There should be about ten villages of each grade, and each village should have more than thirty families, or about 270 members. Families in the "Ten Meritorious Actions" villages, nearest the monastic compound, would each be given approximately 120 *mu* of mountainous and agricultural land.[79] Families in the "Five Precepts" villages would each receive 100 *mu,* and those in the "Three Refuges" villages, 75 *mu*.

Village mayors would ensure that their communities had at least two elementary schools for children, a preaching hall, a hall for reading scriptures, and a general gathering or Lotus Society *(lianshe)* hall. Each of the three grades of village would elect a village head, operating under the highest civic leader, the mayor of the holy mountain *(shanzhang)*. These persons would make certain that a high school was established for each grade, along with further specialized educational opportunities for farming and forestry.

Within the designated pure land, individuals would not be permitted to marry or join the monastic community until age twenty. Men who wished to enter the order would be required to study as novices for one to three years prior to ordination, while women would serve as novices for two to five years. All would begin by studying the texts and disciplines of one particular school for at least four years, and then, if successful, proceed to the study of other schools. Those who were successful would be eligible to serve as teachers and various officers within the monastic community. After five years of such service, they would be permitted to travel outside the pure land on mission work. After twenty years on the mountain (or fifteen years on the mountain plus five in service outside it), individuals would be eligible to be selected to serve in the important position of rector *(shouzuo)* of one of the Buddhist schools.

According to Taixu, those who live within the precincts of the pure land ought to pray for the welfare of people in all countries who suffer from calamities and natural disasters. Furthermore, they should send out teams of lay Buddhists under the guidance of senior monastic bodhisattvas to accomplish good works. To explain the purposes of the pure land, they should welcome interested individuals and representatives of all countries and governments who wanted to visit. In an ecumenical spirit, they should periodically welcome Buddhists from all over the world for conferences on the Sangha's global mission. And they should encourage all peoples to set aside some of their money for the establishment of similar pure lands on earth.

RESHAPING THE SANGHA

From early in his career, Taixu was given to this type of utopian planning. By bringing forth quite detailed organizational configurations, he hoped to draw people into a collective dream for a restructured and reconstituted reality of the future. Many Buddhists appreciated his attempts to think through difficult and complex problems and to present concrete solutions. Yet the specificity of his idealistic plans for reform also provided fuel for incendiary negative reactions, particularly to his frequently revised plans for reorganizing the monastic establishment.

Taixu believed that a radical reorganization of the Chinese sangha was an urgent necessity because the poor quality of Buddhist monks in the Republican period was not merely a challenge to the sangha's respected place within society but a grave threat to the very future of the religion in China. Although his harsh critical refrains about his fellow monks won him few friends in the monastic community, the renewal and reorganization of the sangha remained a key element of his message throughout his career. On the majority of the Chinese sangha, Taixu stated sharply:

> First, they are seldom interested in social service or the work of educating the society. The priests or rather monks are generally ignorant, and their services to society are confined to singing of masses or prayers in the funeral services. Secondly, although the monks divide themselves into sects or schools, each pursuing a special object, yet they always fail to accomplish that object. Thirdly, the monks are always religious recluses, taking no interest in the affairs of the community or the country and they are in turn slighted by the Government or the ruling classes.

> Fourthly, most of the Chinese Buddhist monks lack the necessary modern scientific knowledge and are also ignorant of the current thoughts and ideas of the world. In view of such disabilities, they are unable to preach the doctrines of the Buddha in such a way as to appeal to the minds of the modern people.[80]

Taixu's controversial plan for addressing this deplorable situation, the *Zhengli sengqie zhidu lun* (Reorganization of the Sangha System), was composed in 1915, during his period of sealed confinement at Putuo Shan, and published in part in 1920, in the first issue of *Haichao yin*. As already noted, Taixu's plan included recommendations for markedly increasing the educational requirements for ordination, for requiring most monks to engage in physical labor to ensure the economic self-sufficiency of the monasteries, for terminating the vulgar commercialization of ritual practice, and for establishing various social-service and educational ventures. In 1921, Yu-yue Tsu observed that the reformer's proposal included a number of ambitious ideas:

> He proposes to have a national system embracing preaching chapels and parishes in every city, a certain number of monasteries and charitable institutions in each province, and a national monastery and university in the capital city of the country. As a part of the national institution he would have a library containing an extensive collection of Buddhist literature and a museum for Buddhist art. Into the museum he would have all images moved, so that other buildings could be free of them. Belonging as he does to the Dhyāna or Meditation School, founded by Bodhidharma in the sixth century, Taixu is opposed to all idolatry, and tolerates it only as an accommodation to the weakness of the masses. As to the monks, he would encourage manual labor as an antidote to laziness and would encourage more time being spent for meditation and study for spiritual development. In his account of his travels in Japan and Taiwan he had a brief reference to his daily life to the effect that it has been his practice to spend at least three or four hours every day in meditation, and he has never allowed a day to pass without it, even the busiest day, during the past ten years. How far he will be able to carry out the reforms he has conceived in his mind only time will show. Meanwhile he has been influential in winning many serious-minded men and women to the pursuit of the religious (monastic) life.[81]

In his original proposal of 1915, Taixu estimated that the Buddhist monastic community in Republican China consisted of approximately eight hundred thousand men and women. Though in later writings Taixu was to recommend significant reductions, in his first plan he specifically stated that the number of monks and nuns was about right in relation to China's total population.[82] His main interest lay in developing a thorough scheme for systematizing and regulating monastic practice. Therefore he considered a wide range of relevant topics. For example, although he was later to abandon the idea, he initially recommended that the monastic community be tightly restructured around eight central Buddhist "schools" *(zong)*. Four were named after mountains: the Qingliang (Huayan or Xianshou), the Tiantai (Fahua), the Lushan (Jingtu or Lian), and the Nanshan (Lü). Three schools were named after particular monasteries: the Jiaxiang (Sanlun or Faxing), the Cien (Weishi or Faxiang), and the Shaoshi (Chan). One school was named after a period in the Tang dynasty: the Kaiyuan (Zhenyan or Mi) sect.[83]

In addition, as Tsu indicated, Taixu carefully charted the Buddhist institutions that would be required at the county *(xian)*, district *(dao)*, provincial *(sheng)*, and national *(guo)* levels. For example, he felt that every county ought to have one Vinaya hall *(xingjiao yuan)* for teaching Buddhist discipline, one Dharma center *(fa yuan)* for the study of scripture, one Lotus Society *(lianshe)* hall for recitation and meditation, four preaching halls *(xuanjiao yuan)* for the propagation of the faith, and one nunnery. Every district should have ten additional institutions: eight monasteries, each representing one of the eight schools, plus one Buddhist hospital and an orphanage for infants. Every province should also have an "Institute for Religious Adherence" *(chijiao yuan)* to coordinate mission work, plus an orphanage for children. In the country's capital, there should be a central Buddhist Vihāra *(fofa sengyuan)* for research and sangha representation. Moreover, there should be a central Buddhist Bank *(fojiao yinhang)* that would manage all monastic financial concerns, preventing private property claims

within the sangha and providing a fair and democratic appropriation of funding for the multifaceted Buddhist mission in China.[84]

Taixu especially liked to create charts, application forms, and certificates, all of which he thought could help regularize monastic procedures and clarify responsibilities. He designed registration forms for infants and children being received by Buddhist orphanages, application forms for men and women wishing to enter the sangha, monastic certificates for bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs officially entering the religious life, and so forth. He also summarized in chart form the rules governing a person's decision to enter or leave the monastic order, as well as those for returning to the order after renouncing it for life as a layperson. He set age limits on entering the order (not under fifteen and not over forty) and on various monastic positions.[85]

Finally, Taixu offered guidelines for the education and the professional responsibilities of monastic leaders at every level and in every type of Buddhist organization. Broad educational requirements could be charted, and standardized monastic ranks for teachers delineated, from Venerable Master *(dashi)* to Tantric Master *(yuqieshi)*, Dharma Master *(fashi)*, Meditation Master *(chanshi)*, and Vinaya Master *(lüshi)*.[86] The reformer even offered suggestions for regulating monastic vestments and designed his own system of modern garb, which ranged from a simple, unadorned robe to robes with a secular cut and multiple stripes (five, seven, nine, etc., up to a maximum of twenty-five stripes).[87] Taixu obviously took some delight in attending to such details in his schemes for the future. His big picture of a modern form of Buddhism required applying to the religious canvas innumerable small yet bold strokes of pigment.

By 1927, Taixu had sharply reduced his original estimate of the number of monks and nuns in China. He acknowledged that in 1915, optimistic about the number of novices entering the order, he had used the figure of eight hundred thousand. Yet he had come to think that the overall numerical decline that had begun with the Taiping attacks on Buddhist monasteries in the nineteenth century was continuing, especially as a result of recent anti-Buddhist actions of the Republican government. Thus he concluded that the total number of people active in the sangha could no longer be more than two hundred thousand, not counting those associated with Lamaism in Mongolia and Tibet. Most of this number, Taixu claimed, should be engaged in some form of productive labor to ensure the self-sufficiency of the monasteries.[88]

By 1930, Taixu had given up his idea of using the eight Buddhist schools to reorganize the sangha because, he said, unlike Buddhism in Japan, the schools had no distinct bases within the contemporary Chinese monastic community. By this time he was also prepared to estimate that the sangha had been reduced to about 160,000 monks and nuns.[89] More significantly, he charged that most of that number were not truly qualified to be members of the sangha and should not be called monastics. Rather, they should work at farming or some other type of productive labor to support the much smaller number who actually had the abilities to study scripture and spread the Dharma. As Taixu wrote unabashedly,

> Most monks *(seng)* who do not have the qualifications to be monastics should be working monks, farming and performing labor, so that the elite minority may conduct research and study scripture. . . . Through the productive work of the great majority of monastics, the minority may be provided for so that they can focus all of their attention on advanced studies. Thus will monastic living be made independent rather than dependent on the people. This is a way to relieve many concerns of our day. Strictly speaking, these individuals who serve as farmers and laborers should not really be called "monks." Because they farm and perform labor and are neither able to cultivate the above mentioned qualifications for monastics nor perform the responsibilities of monastics, they cannot really be called "monks."[90]

The "elite minority" who were truly qualified to be called monastics numbered a mere twenty to forty thousand, according to different texts that Taixu wrote on the subject. These he divided into three classifications: student monastics *(xue seng)*; "normal duty" monastics *(zhi seng)*, also called bodhisattva monastics *(pusa seng)*; and emeritus monastics *(de seng)*, or elders *(zhanglao seng)*, who had retired from normal duties. In 1930, Taixu specified that there should be approximately ten thousand monastics engaged in studies in four

grades, from basic education to advanced Buddhist research. In addition, twenty-five thousand monastics should engage in teaching and social-service careers, along with a smaller but unspecified number of elders supervising sixty centers for religious cultivation *(xiu lin)* in practices especially related to the Pure Land and Esoteric traditions. The sangha would therefore total thirty-five to forty thousand individuals.[91]

Later in 1930, Taixu again revised these numbers downward, to include only twenty thousand monastics: five thousand students, twelve thousand bodhisattva monastics, and three thousand elders.[92] Of the twelve thousand bodhisattva monastics, five thousand should be spreading the Dharma through public preaching and teaching, three thousand serving as administrators in Buddhist educational institutions, fifteen hundred engaging in Buddhist charitable and relief work, fifteen hundred serving as instructors in the monastic educational system, and one thousand participating in various cultural affairs.[93]

Although Taixu devoted far more attention to addressing the quality of monastics than their quantity, he did think that the two questions were interrelated.[94] Still, it was his fluctuations in actual and ideal numbers that made it difficult for many Buddhists to take his various schemes seriously. Five years later, in 1935, surely in response to criticism, Taixu raised the ideal number of monastics back to forty thousand.[95] As Welch has asserted, it was in large measure "as if he were a child deploying regiments of toy soldiers."[96]

Taixu's ideas about educational reforms were more widely accepted, though in some cases only slowly and grudgingly. To begin with, he was highly critical of secular education in China, believing that the public educational system had utterly failed to prepare a literate and informed citizenry to respond appropriately to the problems and opportunities of the contemporary world. Modernization in public education had come to mean eclectically imitating certain Japanese or western practices without adopting any comprehensive model of educational aims or learning processes. Therefore Taixu proposed that the sangha operate its own nationwide system of Buddhist parochial schools in four grades. Ideally, every county should have a primary school; every few counties, an elementary school; every ten counties,

a middle school; and every province, a Buddhist high school. In addition to offering an excellent secular program of education, these schools would provide Buddhist studies—two hours a week for primary students, three hours for elementary students, four hours for middle school students, and six hours for high school students.[97]

Taixu felt that monastic education had improved only slightly during the early Republican period, with the impetus for reform in most cases coming only from the need to resist government confiscation of monastic property. The traditional system of monastic education in China enabled most monks to become familiar with just a few basic scriptures. A limited number of monks had the opportunity to study monastic rules in a Vinaya school or Buddhist doctrine under the tutelage of a Dharma master, who typically specialized in certain sacred texts. This latter system of apprenticeship to an instructor, as Welch notes, "produced a very small number of monks who knew the traditional interpretation of a few texts very well indeed, but it did not encourage originality or adaptation to changing times."[98] Taixu commented,

> In the past, the way of studying the religion has been exclusively to listen to scripture. If persons listened for ten years, then they could also become preaching Dharma masters. This is not a complete monastic education! My idea is that the monastic education which is needed today must include, as sequential elements of a complete system, the study of rules and ceremonies, the study of religious doctrine, and the cultivation of experiential knowledge.[99]

According to Taixu, the beginning curriculum for the study of rules and ceremonies *(lü yi)* should assume that the student is a high school graduate and consist of a two-year course of study for members of the monastic community only. The first six months should be devoted to rules and rites for novices, while the final year and a half should focus on those appropriate for ordained monks. In every province, one special sangha school should offer this basic program of studies.

Taixu divided the second phase of monastic education, the study of religious doctrine, into two levels. The first should correspond to a

university level of education and emphasize general doctrinal studies *(putong jiaoli)*. Its four-year curriculum, which should also be open to laypeople as auditors, should lead to a baccalaureate degree. There should be one institution for every three provinces that would offer this university level of Buddhist education. At the second level of doctrinal studies, several hundred especially gifted monks ought to be engaged in a three-year program of advanced doctrinal studies *(gaodeng jiaoli)* leading to the Ph.D. degree *(boshi xuewei)*. A national institute for Buddhist research would need to be established for this purpose.

Beyond these programs, a very small number of monks ought to proceed to an additional three-year curriculum pursuing the cultivation of "experiential knowledge" *(xiu zheng)* at a center for religious cultivation *(xiu lin)*. For their achievements in the specialized skills of reflection and action *(guan xing)* in accord with recognized meditative and devotional practices, such advanced students might receive the Venerable Scholar degree *(dashi xuewei)*. Thus Taixu envisioned a total of twelve years of post-secondary monastic education as the ideal comprehensive program. As the ever-frustrated dreamer concluded in 1938,

> It will be best if we can do things according to this plan! However, if we look at it from the perspective of present facts, the types of religious facilities and funds with which we can accomplish such things do not exist. And even more scarce are the essential persons of talent who can resolve to achieve such a long-term goal, having endured the hardships of the last twenty years. Therefore, everything I have proposed remains merely an unrealized ideal, and that is all.[100]

CRITICISM AND RESPONSE

Taixu projected that unless the country's Buddhists cooperated to reorganize their institutions along these lines, to restate their message in ways responsive to the unique dilemmas of the modern world, and to redirect their energies toward a socially engaged form of Buddhism and the construction of a pure land on earth, the religion

would simply continue its present trajectory of decline, so that they "need not wait until it was destroyed by a nonreligious government or foreign religion."[101] The key to survival, he knew, would be to find effective ways to link the best traditions of the past with new understandings appropriate to the future.[102] However, the monk also recognized that those bodhisattvas committed to such reformist efforts would encounter on virtually every front at least three powerful opposing forces: conservative Buddhists, radical anti-religionists, and evangelical Christians.

With regard to conservative opposition within the Buddhist community, it was clear to all practitioners that the style and content of Taixu's message contrasted significantly with popular forms of Pure Land piety in China. As a result, the Dharma master Yinguang, who was spearheading the growing Pure Land movement in the Republican period, charged that Taixu, although intellectually gifted, was a "misguided and dangerous" influence within the sangha. Summarizing a personal interview with Yinguang in 1928, Millican reported that the Pure Land master "did not hesitate to express his disapproval of the efforts to reform Buddhism along the lines advocated by Taixu."[103] In fact, after Millican's wife pressed Yinguang for a response to Taixu's criticisms of him, the Pure Land master's eyes reportedly "lit with some sort of fire" as he observed that with Taixu's "rushing here and there," he "knows nothing of what Buddhism means."[104] Yu-yue Tsu wrote of Yinguang:

> He has embraced the Buddhist monastic life as a protest against and refuge from the wickedness of the world. He decries the social gospel of the liberals as untrue to the Buddhist religion and Taixu as a danger to their faith, for, according to him, Buddhism is fundamentally otherworldly, interested in saving souls out of this world, which is hopelessly lost. Any attempt to compromise with it as the liberals are trying to do in building for a better world, as they say, leads men away from real religion, which is implicit reliance upon the saving power of the All-Merciful Amitābha for passage into his Pure Land Paradise.[105]

Although Yinguang was himself reasonably well versed in the Buddhist sūtras, he nevertheless taught that advanced scriptural stud-

ies and meditational disciplines were essentially useless for ordinary believers. In an age of great social disorder and spiritual degeneration, reliance on such difficult methods in the hope of enlightenment was simply foolish. As Reichelt observed, Yinguang's position was unambiguous: "There is a much safer and much quicker way, . . . and that is with a believing heart to ponder and call upon the precious name of the all-embracing Buddha, the Amitābha, boundless in life, in light and in mercy."[106] As Yinguang once wrote to a lay follower, "If you rely on the Pure Land way, faithfully and willingly recite the Buddha's name, and seek rebirth in the West[ern Pure Land], then you can be released from life and death. If you do not rely on the way of reciting the Buddha's name, even those who receive the true transmission of Buddhism cannot find release, not to mention those who do not receive it."[107] Commenting on his own discussions with Yinguang, Millican reported:

> He is a true conservative in both his social and religious convictions. In a personal conversation he stated that China must hold on to the age-long Five Human Relationships of Confucian, that is, Chinese society. And he waxed warm in pointing out that Taixu's efforts to modernize and universalize Buddhism were undermining rather than building up true Buddhism. He feels that Taixu and his group, in trying to give Buddhism a social application in the effort to regenerate society, have missed the true spirit of Buddhism which is essentially otherworldly. And furthermore, since Buddhism has the highest truth it is not necessary to try to harmonize or correlate it with other religions or with modern science. The whole effort of Yinguang is to bolster up the present system and practices of Buddhism as found in its temple life, and to propagate the teachings of the Pure Land. . . . He believes that nine out of ten persons would fail in the exacting task of self-enlightenment and self-deliverance by the Difficult Way of Meditation, so he preaches the way of salvation by faith with an evangelical fervor. His writings abound in accounts of those who have been benefited either physically or spiritually as a result of prayer to Amitābha, the Goddess of Mercy, and others. One of the most striking sections is a letter to the aged and famous Ningbo monk Dixian, in which he urges him to call upon the Goddess of Mercy to heal him of his infirmity. He quotes instances of her miraculous healing power, and reminds him that if such an honored Buddhist leader is not healed it will bring great discredit upon the cause of Buddhism. He adds, "Since the Goddess of Mercy has this great saving power why not in your extremity throw yourself unreservedly and with all your will upon her mercy and thus obtain physical as well as spiritual comfort?"[108]

On the one hand, Taixu displayed a certain respect for this form of devotional piety. He recognized both its popular appeal and its doctrinal legitimacy within the comprehensive framework of Mahāyāna. Moreover, as Pratt points out, quite unlike the layman Ouyang Jingwu, whose interest in Buddhism was purely intellectual, Taixu was a unique combination of "scholar, thinker, *and mystic.*" Highlighting the reformer's own religious practice, Pratt reported in 1924 that at the Wuchang Buddhist Institute, "in marked contrast to Mr. Ouyang's college, daily worship at the very attractive little temple is a part of the training, and in this Taixu regularly takes part with all his students."[109] Such cultic participation by the reformer, however limited, contrasted with the more radical position of those modernists who stridently opposed all forms of worship and ritual as not merely unnecessary but counterproductive.[110]

On the other hand, Taixu firmly argued that any method of spiritual cultivation that did not effectively serve to eliminate a devotee's sense of individuality and selfhood could not lead to ultimate enlightenment. In commenting on one of the most important canonical Pure Land texts, Vasubandhu's *Wuliangshou jing youbotishe yuansheng jie* (Rebirth Treatise), Taixu emphasized that if any recognized Buddhist method "does not oppose a mind that distinguishes a self, then it cannot [lead to] the attainment of wisdom *(bodhi).*"[111] True bodhisattvas, he asserted, could never seek their own rebirth without simultaneously seeking the rebirth of all sentient beings.[112]

Taixu thus sought to distance himself from Pure Land devotionalism because he judged that, in actual practice, it was both ineffective in eliminating the deluded sense of "self" and inconsistent in linking the future of any one bodhisattva to the future of all other sentient beings. While Taixu taught that it was not inappropriate to show reverence to Gautama as one's spiritual forerunner and teacher, he

invariably chose to emphasize the way of self-reliance over the way of reliance on others. Because he considered Pure Land techniques to be expedient primarily for uneducated believers, Taixu was sure that the school's influence would wane as the number of such persons steadily declined in China through educational reforms, both secular and religious. Mistaken in such a conclusion about Buddhist spirituality, Taixu was fortunate that the conservative forces within the sangha did not actively organize to oppose him. Of course, as Callahan quite perceptively points out, in part their opposition "was to the idea of organization itself."[113]

Besides widespread criticism of Taixu's work by conservatives within the Buddhist sangha, there was opposition to it by secular humanists in China. Taixu's efforts to propagate a modern form of Buddhism capable of both benefiting China and becoming the dominant global religion were challenged by intellectuals committed to the view that all religious beliefs and practices were worthless relics of the human past. Such anti-religionists urged officials of government and other institutions to limit the influence of religion throughout Chinese society. They condemned religious commitment for encouraging irrational trust in the power of spiritual beings and in the efficacy of superstitious rituals. In sum, they excoriated all who retarded cultural progress by upholding the value of traditional religion. The respected scholar Hu Shi, for example, charged that all forms of religion had utterly failed to create morally better and wiser human beings. Taking special aim at Buddhism as the principal expression of an outmoded "medievalism" in China, he wrote acerbically:

> What spirituality is there, let us say, in the old beggar-woman who dies in the direst destitution, but who dies while still mumbling, "Namu Amita Buddha!" and in the clear conviction that she will surely enter that blissful paradise presided over by the Amita Buddha? Do we earnestly think it moral or spiritual to inculcate in that beggar-woman a false belief which shall so hypnotize her as to make her willingly live and die in such dire conditions where she ought not to have been had she been born in a different civilization?
>
> No! A thousand times No! All those hypnotic religions belong to an age when man had reached senility and felt himself impotent in coping with the forces of nature. Therefore he gave up the fight in despair and, like the disappointed fox in the ancient fable who declared the grapes sour because he could not reach them, began to console himself and teach the world that wealth and comfort are contemptible and that poverty and misery are something to be proud of. From this it was only a step to the idea that life itself was not worth living and that the only desirable thing was the blissful existence in the world beyond. And when wise men calmly taught these ideas, fanatics went further and practiced self-denial, self-torture, and even suicide. In the West, saints prayed, fasted, lived on pillars, and whipped themselves at regular intervals. In medieval China, monks prayed, fasted, and, feeding themselves daily with fragrant oil and tying their bodies with oiled cloth, gladly burned themselves to death as offerings to some deity of Mahāyāna Buddhism.
>
> It was those religions of defeatism that sank the whole civilized world underneath the universal deluge of Medievalism. It took over a thousand years for a portion of mankind to emerge from the civilization which glorifies poverty and sanctifies disease, and slowly build up a new civilization which glorifies life and combats poverty as a crime. . . . The new civilization of the new age has given to men a new religion, the religion of self-reliance as contrasted with the religion of defeatism of the Middle Ages.[114]

In addition to denouncing Mahāyāna Buddhism and other religions for their otherworldliness, secular humanists charged that the vicious competitiveness of exclusivistic religious sects only further demonstrated their harmful influence on societies everywhere. Hu Shi directly attacked Taixu for copying "Christian denominationalism" and for advocating—in a manner uncharacteristic of the Chinese—exclusive loyalty to Buddhism as an institutional religion. Thus he condemned Taixu's attempt to revitalize the Mahāyāna community as a "stubborn effort to outlive historical usefulness."[115] Identifying the essential spirit of all religious practice as "to live for the good of all humanity,"[116] Hu Shi asked, "Why not frankly transfer all our old loyalty to the new instrumentalities of education which are taking the place of the older religions as sources of instruction, inspiration, and consolation?"[117]

Appreciatively recalling his father's strong rationalist opposition to Buddhism and the weathered signpost on his uncle's home that read "No Alms for Buddhist Monks or Daoist Priests,"[118] Hu Shi at least gave Taixu the satisfaction of being explicitly named as an opponent. Most other anti-religious intellectual leaders did not think the Buddhist reformer worthy of mention; from their point of view, Buddhists and their reforms were irrelevant to China's cultural progress.

THE CHRISTIAN CHALLENGE

Besides being sensitive to conservative critics within the Buddhist sangha and to secular-humanist critics within intellectual circles, Taixu was acutely aware of the powerful and growing influence of Christianity, Buddhism's new religious challenger in East Asia. He realized that many of China's young people who were attracted to the cultural ethos and technological achievements of the West were also curious about its dominant religious heritage. Recognizing Christianity and Buddhism as the two most important religious forces in the modern world, Taixu studied Christian doctrine and invited western scholars to give lectures on the subject to his students and followers. Reichelt, in fact, recalled Taixu's graciousness in inviting him to a Buddhist conference on Lu Shan in 1923:

> Taixu sent me a hearty invitation to attend the conference and to lecture on "The Relation between Christianity and Buddhism."
>
> I visited Taixu at the Buddhist Academy in Wuchang where so many of the idealistic and higher type of Buddhist monks gather round the pulpit of their beloved and esteemed Master, "Explainer of the Law" *(fashi)*. He therefore knew my viewpoint fairly well, and that I would preach Jesus Christ as the perfect revealer of God and the great Savior of the world. Nevertheless he gave me unlimited liberty to speak as a Christian missionary, and introduced me to the audience with most friendly words, saying that he felt it was the duty at this time of every Buddhist to know the inner truths of Christianity just as well as it was the duty of the Christians to know what Buddhism really means. . . . I also had opportunity to talk privately with Taixu. The hours spent with this rare Buddhist mystic in holy pondering over deep questions I shall never forget.[119]

Christian missionaries had become especially known in China for their social welfare work on behalf of the masses—through Christian hospitals, orphanages, schools, and the like. As Philip West has pointed out, most of the missionaries in China were advocates of the liberal Christian Social Gospel, which stressed the immanence of God, the humanity of Jesus, and the fundamental goodness of human nature.[120] Indeed, it could be said that the motive behind Taixu's thorough critique of Christianity was his desire to wrest from the Christians their assumed role as the primary advocates of religiously informed social action for the reform of Chinese society.

As Millican has pointed out, Taixu claimed that Christianity was a dying faith tradition that had run its course in human history. His judgment was based on an analysis of what he considered to be the three fundamental and outmoded ideas on which Christianity was grounded: first, that there is a Creator God who is sovereign over all his creation; second, that there is an eternal soul created by God that is the essence of each human spirit; and third, that there is a redeeming savior, Jesus of Nazareth, who is the only Son of God. According to Millican, in opposition to all three ideas, the Chinese master summarily reasoned, "Now, then, if Cause and Effect are understood the idea of God is exploded. If the unity and succession of all things is understood the idea of a soul is done away with. If human life is understood then the need of a savior is done away with."[121]

Taixu outlined his basic difficulties with the three cornerstones of Christian doctrine in his essay "Wushen lun" (On Atheism).[122] In the modern world of science, the monk began, most intellectuals are advocates of atheistic worldviews, although a few, influenced by western religion and philosophy, still cling to old-fashioned theistic ideas. These, he suggested, generally espouse popular-sounding ideals of individual freedom and equality, based on the belief that each human being is an equally loved "child of God." From this perspective, they encourage all people to relate kindly to one another, under the

authority of the one Creator God, and to eliminate any barriers among them. This is a simple and appealing view, remarked Taixu, but unfortunately, in the case of Christianity, one based on a complex of fundamentally erroneous religious conceptions of a sovereign, soul, and savior.

First, Taixu attacked Christian understandings of God by reiterating criticisms articulated earlier by Zhang Taiyan and others.[123] For example, he argued, Christian theism consistently places humankind in an extremely subservient and dependent status vis-à-vis the divine. God is viewed as having unlimited powers, and all persons are forced to submit to God's commands. Furthermore, they must do so happily, noted Taixu, lest their attitudes and actions constitute a rebellion for which they will be cast into a tortuous hell and separated from God for all eternity. Yet despite their disturbingly vulnerable situation, Christians are instructed that they must always address God not only with respect but with affection, as their "Loving Father." Moreover, according to Christian theology, God is supremely wise and good. However, rather than allowing his beloved children to reside with him in his heavenly kingdom and walk with him in his lush garden, God inexplicably causes them to live in a world of injustice, inequality, and terrible suffering.

Further critiquing the Christian affirmation of God's omnipotence and sovereignty, Taixu raised provocative questions about the status of the Devil. Was this "Satan," who supposedly opposes God, created by God? On the one hand, said the reformer, if Christians were to respond that he was not, then obviously there is that which the Creator God did not create, and his creation has its limits. God's creative skills would then be similar to those of any human artisan who creates only what he or she can. Furthermore, if the Devil is not a creation of God, then there must be another who creates devils and whose powers are comparable to, if not greater than, God's. Indeed, how does any Christian know, Taixu asked, that human beings are creations of God and not of the Devil?

On the other hand, Taixu reasoned, if Christians were to respond that the Devil does belong to God's creation, why can't God control him? And since God punishes those who trust and follow the Devil by casting them into hell, why doesn't he also punish Satan by casting him into hell? Moreover, if God, as the creator, was originally able to control the Devil, why would the same good and loving God not continue to do so but let him endanger the lives and well-being of all humankind? Taixu concluded that these questions are insoluble, and that, when pressed, Christians "do not know adequately how to reply and can only laugh dumbly in embarrassment."[124] A supreme self-existent God, he wrote, is like "something caught in the hairs of a ghost or on the horns of a hare—both nonentities."[125]

Second, the Buddhist reformer objected to the Christian idea of an eternal human soul. If one accepts such a mistaken idea, then one is also led to say that all animals and plants have eternal souls, he maintained. This is the perspective of one who fails to recognize the truth of conditioned origination *(yuanqi)*. As an expedient, Taixu acknowledged, the idea of an eternal soul may help some people move beyond the simple identification of the self with the body. Yet such a doctrine permanently separates and alienates all things from one another. It fails to comprehend the true interdependence and interpenetration of all dharmas (phenomena) and, correspondingly, the bonds of sympathy that properly link humans with all forms of life. In so doing, it actually undermines the most profound basis for social responsibility.

The notion of an eternal soul is effectively refuted in Buddhism, according to Taixu, by two central teachings. The first is that of conditioned origination, which is summarized in the statement that "all things are constituted (evolve) by the conjunction of inherent and affinitative elements." The second is that of consciousness-only *(wei-shi)*, which is succinctly captured in the assertion that "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations." "If we combine these two phrases, . . ." argued Taixu, "we have the dominant thread running through all the Buddha's illuminating teachings regarding the nature of the universe." Explicating the two phrases, the monk argued as follows:

> Of all the things in the universe, whether it be the world as a whole, the smallest particle or even the universe itself, it may be said that there

is nothing that exists independently of relations and that is not involved in the temporal succession or continuity of events. All have a history and a social nature. Things appear in this continuity of successive events in mutual relationship, playing the alternate role of inherent and then of affinitative elements in the process of bringing into existence the individual organizations. We may go farther and say that present causes themselves arise from previous causes. So when we think of things we must realize that in their basic natures they are only temporary aggregates appearing in the cosmic process and having no independent existence in themselves. This is what Buddhists mean when they say "all things are constituted by inherent and affinitative elements."

Now what is meant by the phrase, "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations"? The word "manifestation" *(xian)* has two meanings. First, it means being manifest and second it means manifesting. "Being manifest" refers to the principles or objects which are made manifest and recognized by means of the five senses, by thought, etc. "Manifesting" refers to the active knowing mind which has power to cause change in the things which become objects of knowledge and thus become manifest. In brief, all things in the moment of becoming objects of mind are changed by the power of the mind. This is what is meant by the phrase "all things are idealistic phenomenal manifestations."[126]

These two fundamental ideas of the Buddha effectively defined a religio-philosophical middle position that avoided the two extremes of substantialism and nihilism. According to Taixu, Buddhist idealism provided an extremely helpful framework for interpreting this mediation. In fact, as Wing-tsit Chan has claimed, Taixu contributed to the interest in idealism by trying to "harmonize the philosophy of Weishi, Huayan, and Tiantai, combining their essential features and removing their contradictions."[127] Lai aptly points out that Taixu's interest in Weishi philosophy paralleled that of many other Buddhist modernists who rejected both Pure Land for its faith stance and Chan for its anti-intellectualism.[128] Taixu believed that idealism was not only Mahāyāna's most sophisticated system of thought but the one that would most easily capture the imagination of the growing numbers of educated people in China, both inside and outside of the Sangha.

In addition, as Hamilton confirms, in Taixu's opinion idealism was also "the system most worth the attention of the Western student of philosophy."[129]

Taixu's interpretation of "Dharma-character idealistic philosophy" *(faxiang weishi xue),* says Chan, should not be identified with a western subjective idealism that denies an "original substance" while reducing reality to individual consciousness, nor with a western objective idealism that recognizes a "Universal Mind." Rather, writes Chan, Taixu "attempts to combine them both by holding that in the transformations of the eight consciousnesses, they transform both individually and collectively."[130] Moreover, in clear opposition to Ouyang Jingwu's interpretation of Thusness *(zhenru)* as being absolutely transcendental and radically separated from phenomena, Taixu's more synthetic intuitions led him to view Thusness as both transcendent and immanent. These abstract philosophical arguments—on which his rejections of both the idea of an eternal soul and that of an eternal Creator were based—were not simply academic metaphysical speculations but were aimed directly at establishing an adequate foundation for morality. As Taixu himself explained,

> The Buddhist teaching regarding the nature of the universe has nothing of the mystical or mysterious in it. . . . It asserts positively that there is in the universe no such thing as an independently existing individual thing. Everything great or small is made up of a union of many units or elements in a successive continuity of moments of time. . . . Now when this cosmic view of Buddhism is applied to morality it means that there is an inescapable mutuality in life. In working good or ill to another, one is bringing good or ill to himself. . . . The whole cannot separate itself from the individual and the individual cannot exist apart from the whole.[131]

Third, on the basis of Buddhism's cosmology *(yuzhou guan),* Taixu asserted that humans beings need no divine savior. The monk firmly rejected as fantastic the Christian idea of a supernatural being who breaks in on the natural order to effect an irresistible salvation. To begin with, he could not accept the concept of the absolute divine

forgiveness of sin, which he judged to be in conflict with the Buddhist law of cause and effect. On this point Millican once commented:

> Taixu following this philosophical atheistic school puts great emphasis on Buddhist Law or Dharma *(fofa)*. This law of cause and effect runs through all existence. This applied to human life and conduct means that our future is determined according to unchangeable laws by our conduct in this life. According to this law the necessary outcome of a good life is a better future. Thus we may save ourselves, or determine our own destiny. To one of this school, the idea, for instance, that a murderer or other flagrant sinner can escape by any means from suffering the result of his own sins, is repugnant. Since the culprit could escape from punishment by merely repenting and requesting forgiveness from God, would not evil be encouraged? On the other hand, would not the knowledge that a sure retribution is bound to follow deter evil doers?[132]

In addition, Taixu dismissed the traditional Christian view of Jesus Christ as an incarnate Creator God who had descended to earth to offer salvation. In contrast, according to the monk, Gautama can be considered a "savior" only in the highly qualified sense that he is the prime example of one who earnestly pursued the salvific path that leads to perfect enlightenment and buddhahood. As Taixu himself remarked, "Buddha is not a supernatural but a superhuman being who has realized the truth of all existence, and having conformed his life to it, incites us by his compassion to do likewise."[133] Thus, seeking clarification of Christian doctrine, Taixu once asked Millican if every Christian could become a Christ, as Jesus did, and just as any bodhisattva in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition could realize his or her own buddha-nature.[134] Reichelt remembers that, following his lectures on Christianity at the 1923 Buddhist conference at Lu Shan's Dalin si, Taixu graciously responded, "Jesus Christ is the incarnated Dao. This I now understand. But for us the chief thing is that *the Dao can also be incarnated in us.*"[135]

Although Christianity was fatally flawed by these three mistaken notions of God, soul, and savior, according to Taixu, it nevertheless had one special contribution to make to the modern history of religion: aiding Buddhism in its development. In an important 1938 lecture entitled "Zhongguo xu yejiao yu Ou Mei xu fojiao" (China Needs Christianity and Europe and America Need Buddhism), Taixu argued that the Chinese Buddhist community ought to reflect on the unique energy and spirit exhibited within the Christian church. Such a spirit could help revive Buddhism in China, thus benefiting the nation and the world. From his perspective, Buddhist practitioners had to recognize that the great scientific and technological accomplishments of the West were intrinsically related to central elements of the Christian tradition, elements that had developed since the Middle Ages and that unfortunately were not present to the same degree within the Buddhist heritage.

The primary aspect of Christianity that Taixu wished to lift up for emulation was its ability to organize and motivate individual adherents in normative modes of religious belief and practice. Christians, he noted, were led to experience their faith as a universal one, leading to a sense of order, harmony, and community with others. The church, he concluded after visiting Europe and the United States, had been able through ritual acts and opportunities for fellowship to instill in individual believers, despite their differences, a remarkable oneness of mind and spirit that shaped their everyday lives and energized them for mission. Chinese Buddhism had once displayed that spirit, he suggested, but in the modern world there was no common spirit or discipline within the religious community. The Sangha appeared dispirited and disorganized. Therefore, he asserted, "we must now learn a lesson from Christianity in order to improve Buddhism, enliven its spirit, and influence the people."[136]

In accord with this judgment, and lamenting the fact that Buddhist monks in China officiated only at funeral services, the reformer encouraged the design of new Buddhist services for celebrating all the important events in a person's life, such as the birth of an infant, the beginning of a child's education, a wedding, a birthday, the birth anniversary of a deceased family member, and so on.[137] When Taixu conducted a modern Buddhist wedding ceremony in Shanghai in 1927, he drew an immediate outburst of criticism from traditionalists within the sangha. He noted that some monastic leaders even believed that such new rites were Communist-influenced.[138]

From Taixu's perspective, Christianity's most compelling aspect was its ability to engender in diverse adherents a singleness of purpose and unified commitment to mission, while its weakest point was its utter inability to permit rational inquiry into the nature of faith. As a result, he observed, within Christian communities there existed an unfortunate and irreconcilable bifurcation between faith and reason, religious and scientific discourse:

> The life of Europeans and Americans is scientific, but their faith is unscientific. While contemporary Europeans and Americans need religion, their religion is divorced from and contradictory to a practical, scientific life. Theirs has become a type of divided and inconsistent life. Thus in order to practice religion, they must cast aside reason; but in order to pursue a practical life, they must cast aside faith. This is the sad situation now in Europe and the United States.[139]

Christians are forced to compartmentalize religion, Taixu argued, because its logic is wholly incompatible with the practical, scientific logic of everyday discourse and endeavor. And just as Christianity can supply what Chinese Buddhism needs, so Chinese Buddhism can supply what Christianity needs: a religious heritage that is not in direct conflict with scientific reasoning but that has the potential to produce a high degree of trust, commitment, and community.

TOWARD A RELIGIONLESS FUTURE

Taixu was convinced that religious believers of all traditions could learn from one another and benefit from one another's experiences. As he once stated, "It is my belief that Buddhism has enough variety in its many aspects to meet the needs of all temperaments and classes of people. Nevertheless it is possible to think that all religions share in some central core of truth to which each forms in its own way a separate gateway."[140] Thus his active ecumenical work within the global Buddhist community—which inspired the creation in 1950 of the World Fellowship of Buddhists—was complemented by his efforts

toward greater interreligious cooperation and dialogue. As noted in Chapter 3, in 1943 he participated in the founding of the Association of Chinese Religious Believers, the executive committee of which included, in addition to Taixu, leaders in the Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic communities. Taixu was also serving, at the time of his death, as an executive director of the Philosophy of Life Institute, founded by the Roman Catholic bishop Paul Yu Bin. In the *China Christian Year Book, 1932–1933,* Reichelt wrote of the monk's open and congenial spirit toward members of the Christian church:

> He is always friendly and noble in his attitude towards Christians. Was it not for the—according to his opinion—limited and meaningless Christian idea of God as a personality and a creator, and the equally meaningless idea of Christ as the only perfect revealer of the divine and the only savior of the world—were it not for these things—Taixu would most willingly proclaim Christianity as a special and in many respects a very strong form of Mahāyāna Buddhism, given and adapted to western races.[141]

Although Taixu was an inclusivist who was open to what might be learned in dialogue with adherents of other religions, he nevertheless remained firmly convinced of the absolute truth of the Buddha's Dharma. Yet he clearly emphasized that institutional religion, including the institutional form of religion known as Mahāyāna Buddhism, should be understood as a conveyance (a "yāna," or *sheng*) to the realization of truth—that is, as a means to an end, not an end in itself. Thus he concluded his essay "On Atheism" with an intriguing description of the historical evolution of religion. His primary tenet was that true religion is always preparing people for a religionless future. His arguments reflect a blend of Marxist ideology, with which he had been familiar since his youth, and the religio-philosophical perspectives of the wisdom schools of Buddhism.

In essence, Taixu asserted that when people venerate sages or buddhas, this is not only their own misfortune but, in a significant sense, the misfortune of the one who is declared to be a sage or a buddha. The true sage, he observed, surely hopes that the people will not designate anyone as a sage. In the same way, "true religion must

daily take as its ultimate hope that the world will not use religion." How is it possible for sages not to be venerated, he asked rhetorically, and how can the world ultimately dispense with religious practice? Taixu's answer was: by all people becoming sages and all becoming buddhas, "yet because all sentient beings have not yet become buddhas, and all people have not yet become sages, humankind has sages and worthies and the world has religions."[142]

Like the ninth-century Chan iconoclast Linji (d. 867), Taixu considered the reverencing of sages and buddhas to be unfortunate precisely because it turns people's minds from their own responsibilities and potentialities. As long as people depend on the powers of other "great beings," he argued, they fail to develop their own hidden powers for self-transformation. As long as they worship other beings as sacred, they fail to perceive their own sacrality. For these reasons, Taixu considered all forms of devotionalism, whether Christian, Buddhist, or any other, to be expedient expressions that would ultimately give way to a more perfect view. "After the world honors the Dharma for a long time," he declared, "the truth will be spoken, the gates of all expediencies open, the true nature of reality manifest, and atheism will still be considered the final teaching."[143]

To illustrate this point, Taixu recommended comparison with the political realm. Again articulating a Mahāyāna Buddhist argument with Marxist overtones, he wrote, "Progress in the realm of government is from the authority of tribal chieftains to a monarchy, and from a monarchy to a republic, and from a republic to [the ideal of] no government at all. In religion, progress is from [the belief in] many gods to one god, from one god to sages and worthies, and from sages and worthies to no religion at all."[144]

According to Taixu, Mahāyāna Buddhism, which is ultimately atheistic and combines morality with scientific principles, is the most advanced and perfect form of institutional religion. The time will come when the Buddhist Dharma will inform the daily lives of all persons, but "Buddhism" as a formally structured religious tradition will be forgotten, much as "when one catches a hare, the snare is forgotten, or when one catches a fish, the fish trap is forgotten."[145] Thus the essence of the Buddhist tradition will remain, Taixu asserted, and

its impact on human life will expand beyond measure. However, it will not be consciously labeled or thought of as "Buddhism." Whatever its merits, Christian theism, because of its place in the evolutionary religious chain and the attachments that it engenders, is obviously not in a similar position to help people move beyond to an ultimate vision of codependent reality.

During this final age of transition toward the religionless future, argued Taixu, the Chinese Buddhist community is called upon to reform and reenergize itself for its mission of teaching and service to all sentient beings. The required reformation of Buddhism, the necessary redefinition of the essential bodhisattva path, is, he recognized, iconoclastic by its very nature because no attachments can be allowed to prevent the attainment of complete enlightenment. Yet the process should not be destructive. Rather, those committed to it should carefully analyze, select, adapt, and utilize within human culture—and within Christianity, as Buddhism's most important competitor and dialogue partner—that which is in consonance with the highest levels of wisdom and compassion as exhibited by the Enlightened One.

As Taixu pointed out in his essay, "Xin jiu wenti de genben jiejue" (The Fundamental Solution to the Issue of the New and the Old), in the twentieth century many are caught up in a bitter clash between extreme conservatism and radical iconoclasm. Their distress, he observed, is largely the result of a failure to follow a middle way and to avoid rigid polarizations within society:

> One perspective considers anything new as comparatively better and anything old as bad. Therefore, one ought to select only that which is new and use it, while merely discarding that which is old. Another perspective considers anything old as comparatively better and anything new as dangerous. Therefore, one ought to rely on the old and stay with it, while blocking the new and shunning its use.[146]

A much wiser perspective, averred Taixu, acknowledges that both the old and the new are complex matters and that neither is wholly good or bad. Therefore Buddhists in the contemporary, pluralistic world should seriously attend to their religious and cultural heritage while learning from others, realizing that their tradition is dynamic,

evolving, and finally to be transcended. In an age marked by utopian dreaming, Taixu was intentionally calling his "new monks" to a uniquely modern form of Buddhism and beyond.

Lai has correctly pointed out that the criticisms of Christian theism articulated by Taixu and most of his contemporaries were inadequate and unsophisticated.[147] Taixu tended to caricature Christianity, failing to recognize its diversities and complexities, even as he represented a rather limited and overly rationalistic view of Buddhism as a living tradition. Much more comprehensive and sensitive reflections by Chinese Buddhists and Christians alike on the foundational truths and the elasticity of these two traditions would be required to advance the dialogue. Yet Taixu's unusual intention to listen, if not his often simplistic rhetoric, should be recognized as a significant contribution to Buddhist-Christian dialogue in his day. Although he did not adequately model the spiritual adventure of "passing over and coming back"[148] that most would now assume to be critical to the continuing maturation of such dialogue, Taixu did provide a far more engaging paradigm for interreligious dialogue as a style of life than did most Chinese Buddhist masters in the Republican period.

CHAPTER 6

TAIXU'S LEGACY

None of Taixu's twenty-four tonsure disciples and grandson-disciples proved capable enough in the continuation of his master's work to be widely recognized. In fact, six of them left the order to return to lay life, and two renounced Buddhism altogether.[1] Yet after the reformer's death in 1947, there were prominent members of the sangha in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan who were appreciative of his legacy and sought to advance his progressive agenda. That was not, however, always an easy or popular endeavor.

REFORM AND REVOLUTION IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND HONG KONG

Classic Marxist theories about the origin, value, and end of religion provided the basic rubric for the state's dealing with Buddhism in the People's Republic of China after 1949. Although Mao Zedong promised protection for religious believers—as long as they were not engaged in counterrevolutionary activities—most local cadres were quick to include Buddhist monks and nuns among those undesirable